

Step Inside A Serene Montecito Home With Stunning Ocean Views

BY GRACE BEULEY HUNT / APRIL 21, 2023



A rug from Sacco Carpet grounds the living room, which features sofas from The Bright Group, Bespoke by Luigi Gentile lounge chairs and an Erwan Boulloud sideboard. The sconces are Hervé Van der Straeten and the pendant is from Balsamo Antiques.

HOUSE DETAILS

Photography:

Trevor Tondro/OTTO

Interior Design:

Penny Drue Baird, [Dessins LLC](#)

Sweeping views of the water and Channel Islands. Big, open rooms that act as conduits for sea breezes. Leafy oaks to harbor hawks and ravens. A garden with milkweed for butterflies, bougainvillea for hummingbirds and citrus trees for homemade margaritas. It was this quintessentially Montecito wish list that led Penny Drue Baird's clients—a couple with deep ties to the area—to purchase a vacation home discreetly nestled in the hills. They named it Pabellón (or “canopy” in Spanish) for its perch within the trees, and tasked Baird with crafting interiors that would defer to the spectacular setting.

“I’m a big believer that interior design should respect a building’s architecture,” Baird muses. And so, taking stock of the newly constructed dwelling’s cathedral ceilings and material palette of stone, wood and plaster, she imagined a modern riff on classic Santa Barbara style: a home designed with ease, entertaining and indoor-outdoor living top of mind, yet peppered with artistic conversation pieces. “We wanted comfort, a relaxed mood and a neutral backdrop to let the trees and ocean shine,” the homeowner adds.

The designer began by tackling the home’s greatest design challenge: its scale. To bring a sense of intimacy to the cavernous living room, she situated a seating area up to the travertine fireplace, arranging a pair of extra-deep, canvas-covered sofas in an L-shaped configuration that echoes the volume of a sectional but with a more formal feel. Adding notes of warmth, a large wicker pendant hangs above while a diamond pattern sisal rug grounds the milieu. Facing a similar abundance of square footage in the primary bedroom, she convinced her clients to select a four-poster bed to “take up some volume,” then carved out a spot by the windows for enjoying morning coffee while soaking up the best views in the house. And to bring a sense of coziness to the lower-level family room, she covered the walls and ceiling in a Porter Teleo wallpaper featuring large-scale, hand-painted squiggles in a custom champagne colorway.

Conversely, in smaller rooms, carefully considered pieces create a sense of balance and grandeur in keeping with the rest of the residence. The dining area offers a particularly creative example. Since the as-delivered floor plan lacked a formal dining room—and the clients are avid hosts with a large brood of children and grandchildren—Baird “shopped the house” for usable space, landing on an errant hallway which she then turned into dinner party HQ. To balance the space’s narrow footprint, she anchored it with two towering wicker urns replete with alocasia plants. Drawing the eye further vertically and horizontally, she commissioned lighting designer Andrea Claire to create a mobile-like bamboo chandelier that spans the length of the dining table.

Amid a sea of calming neutral tones and natural textures, Baird’s talent for sourcing one-of-a-kind pieces shines extra bright. Many items were purchased on designer-client shopping trips to Paris, including such showstoppers as the living room’s cantilevered Fabrice Ausset marble coffee table or the same area’s brass-and-rock-crystal Erwan Boulloud sideboard. Both read in context like fabulous jewels against a timeless outfit. “That piece will always remind us of a wonderful trip to France together,” the client notes of the latter. “Penny has an eye for finding incredible pieces that pull a room together in ways I could never imagine.” Her ability to build environments with pleasing variety and a sense of tension is a point of pride for the designer. Baird’s one rule for a successful room? “Everywhere you look, there should be something to talk about,” she says.

From far-flung treasures to comfortable nooks perfect for sipping a fresh-squeezed cocktail, this home’s waltz between casual and elevated befits a dreamy California locale beloved in equal measure for its rustic and glamorous accents. “Saying the name ‘Montecito’ immediately gives you a vibe to work with,” Baird reflects. “And here, that was half of the story.”