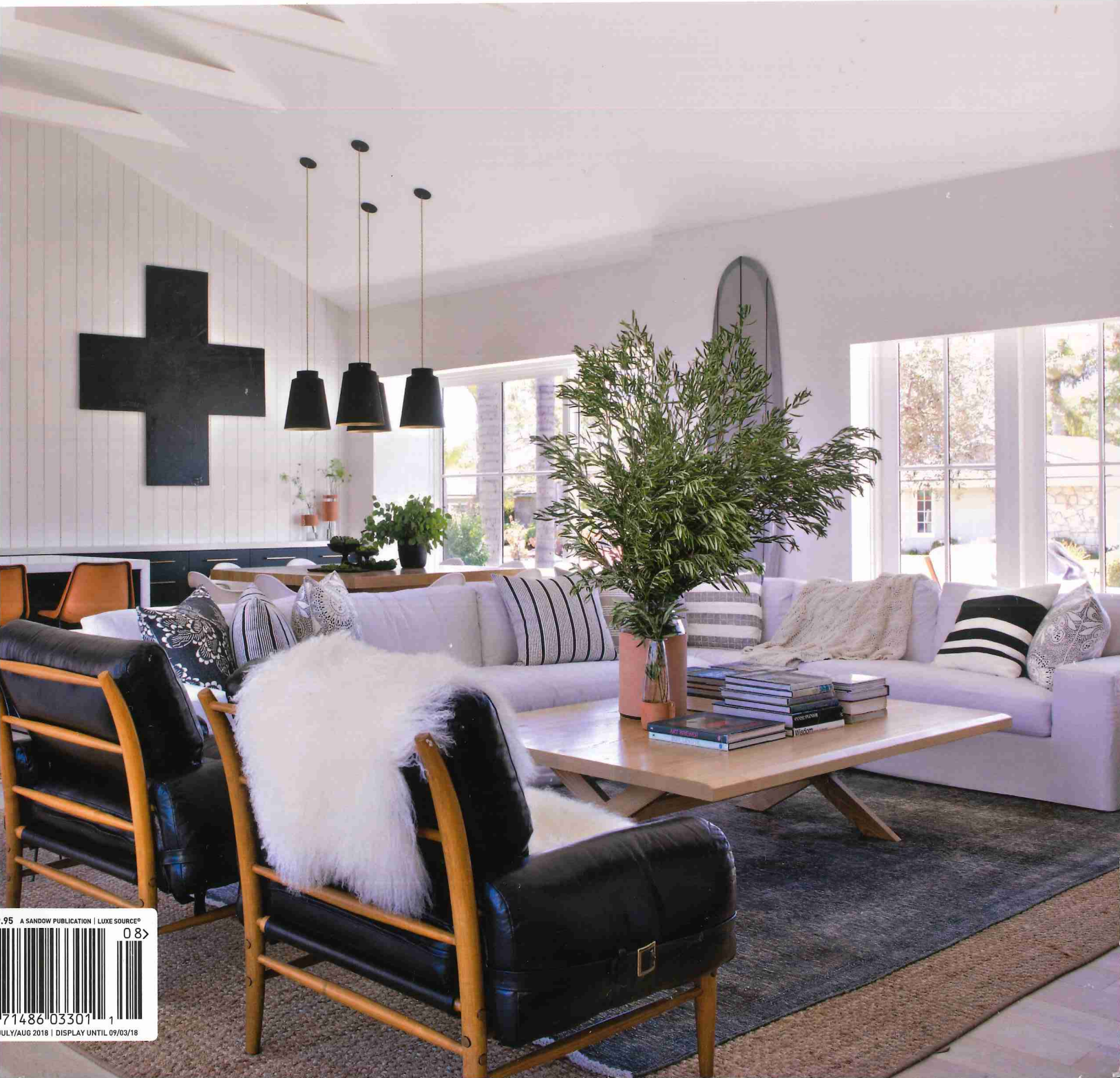
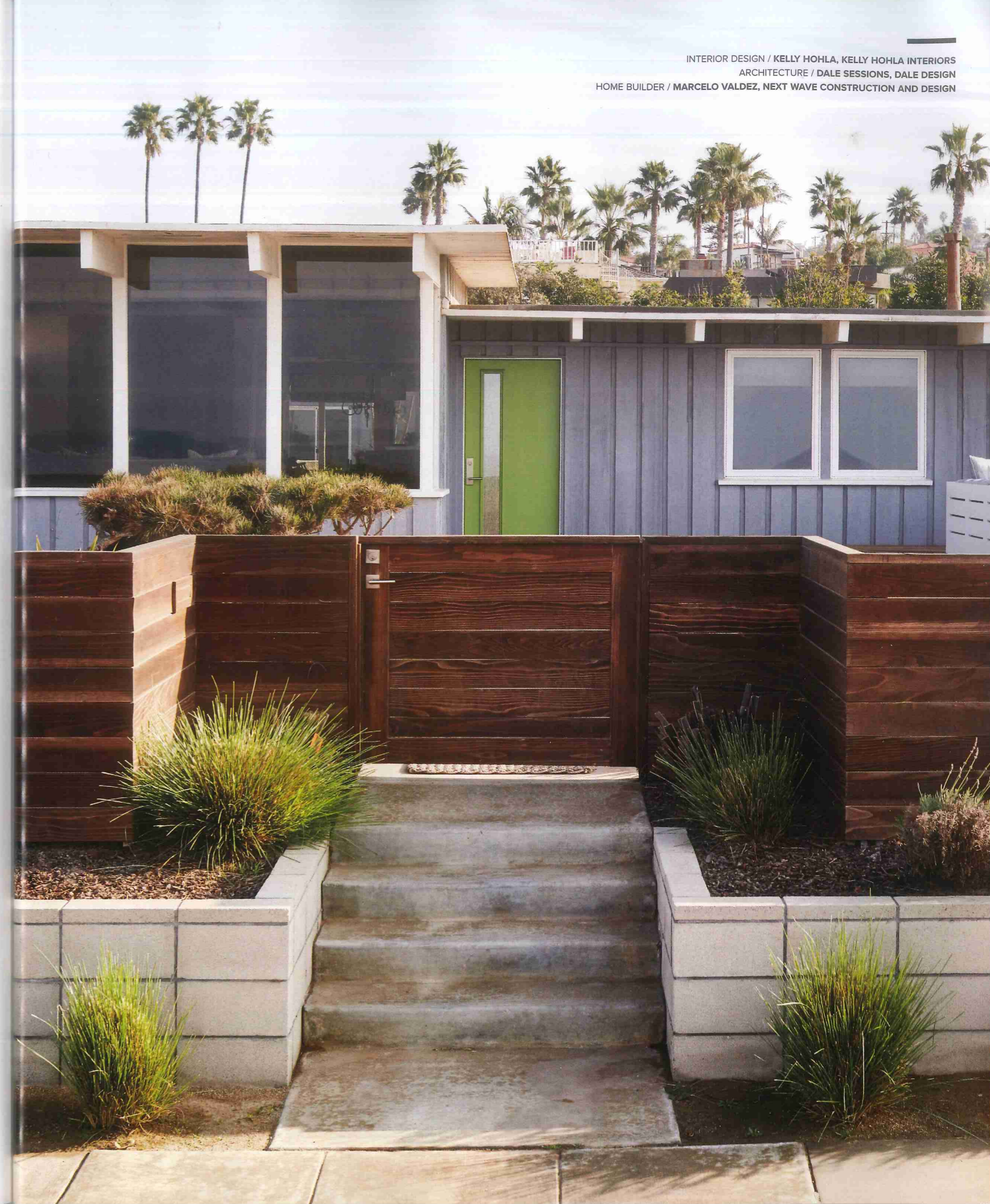


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SEA CHANGE

A THOROUGH MAKEOVER TRANSFORMS A DARK SAN DIEGO
BUNGALOW INTO AN AIRY, BEACHSIDE RETREAT.

WRITTEN BY ABIGAIL STONE / PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN MERKL

In the living room of Corry and BJ Watrous' San Diego house, Lawson-Fenning chairs in a Jab fabric Stark carpet. The space is slightly raised in order to take full advantage of the ocean views. Residential designer Dale Sessions replaced the masonry fireplace surround with a Madrepearl quartzite slab from Arizona Tile.

Designer Kelly Hohla hung Hartmann & Forbes shades from Legacy Shading at the Jeld-Wen in the living room. A pair of poufs from CB2 offers a striking contrast to the Blu Dot sofas in neutral, while organic interest comes from the custom Urban Hardwoods coffee table.



"It had a yard and it was on the ocean," remembers Corry Watrous of what prompted her and her husband, BJ, an avid surfer, to purchase a ramshackle beachside San Diego cottage as a vacation home. "Usually you get one or the other, but not both." But, apart from these attributes, the small brown bungalow with dark interiors didn't seem to have much else to recommend it. "It was a '60s house that had not been redone since the '70s," BJ recalls. "We had to do things to brighten it up."

The responsibility for the structure's transformation fell first to general contractor Marcelo Valdez; subsequently the couple brought in designer Kelly Hohla and residential designer Dale Sessions. For Valdez's part, he began by knocking down walls and re-plumbing and rewiring the house. Ceilings were also painted white and a redwood fence was added. "It gave us the chance to modernize the layout of the house," Valdez says. Perhaps not surprisingly, he discovered that "everything needed to be redone." But, he shrugs, "That's typical in these old homes."

With the layout updated, the couple then called in Sessions to enhance and streamline details in the house.

"It had good bones and an amazing location," Sessions says. As for his part, the residential designer enlarged the kitchen to the dining area to improve the home's flow. Dated features, like the railing around the raised living room, were removed. Others, like the fireplace's rough masonry block surround, were upgraded. Madrepearl, its replacement, a gray quartz slab with light veins, now gleams in the sunlight.

Against this bright backdrop, Hohla expertly intertwined the wife's love of elegant French design with the husband's surfer aesthetic, creating chic yet beachy spaces. "Certainly, the colors are bolder than you would see normally in a beach house, and the furniture is a little more polished and sophisticated," says the designer. In the living room, the scheme spun out from an ikat-pattern pillow. "They were going for something really soft, and once we got it, we said that's the blue we're building around for this room. Everything just kind of fell into place after that," she recalls. "We just did little pops of color to punch it up with everything else being super neutral and pulled back—it doesn't take much." The custom wood coffee table, with its



Windsor-style Kartell chairs surround an oval version of Knoll's classic Saarinen table and carry the home's signature gray-blue into the dining area. The polished nickel of the Shine by S.H.O chandelier scatters sunlight around the room. A Mark Nelson Designs sisal rug is underfoot.



Below, left: A faux-raffia-covered buffet from Made Goods sits under Alex Hoerner's photograph *Surface Tension*, found at Art Project Paia in Hawaii. "I just love this piece," says Hohla. "I think it's fun and whimsical."

Below, right: McGuire counter chairs, a backsplash of glass tiles from Galleria Tile in San Francisco and the sparkle of the Olympian White honed-marble countertops from Arizona Tile elevate the simple white kitchen and, channeling beachy glamour, tether the space to the rest of the house.

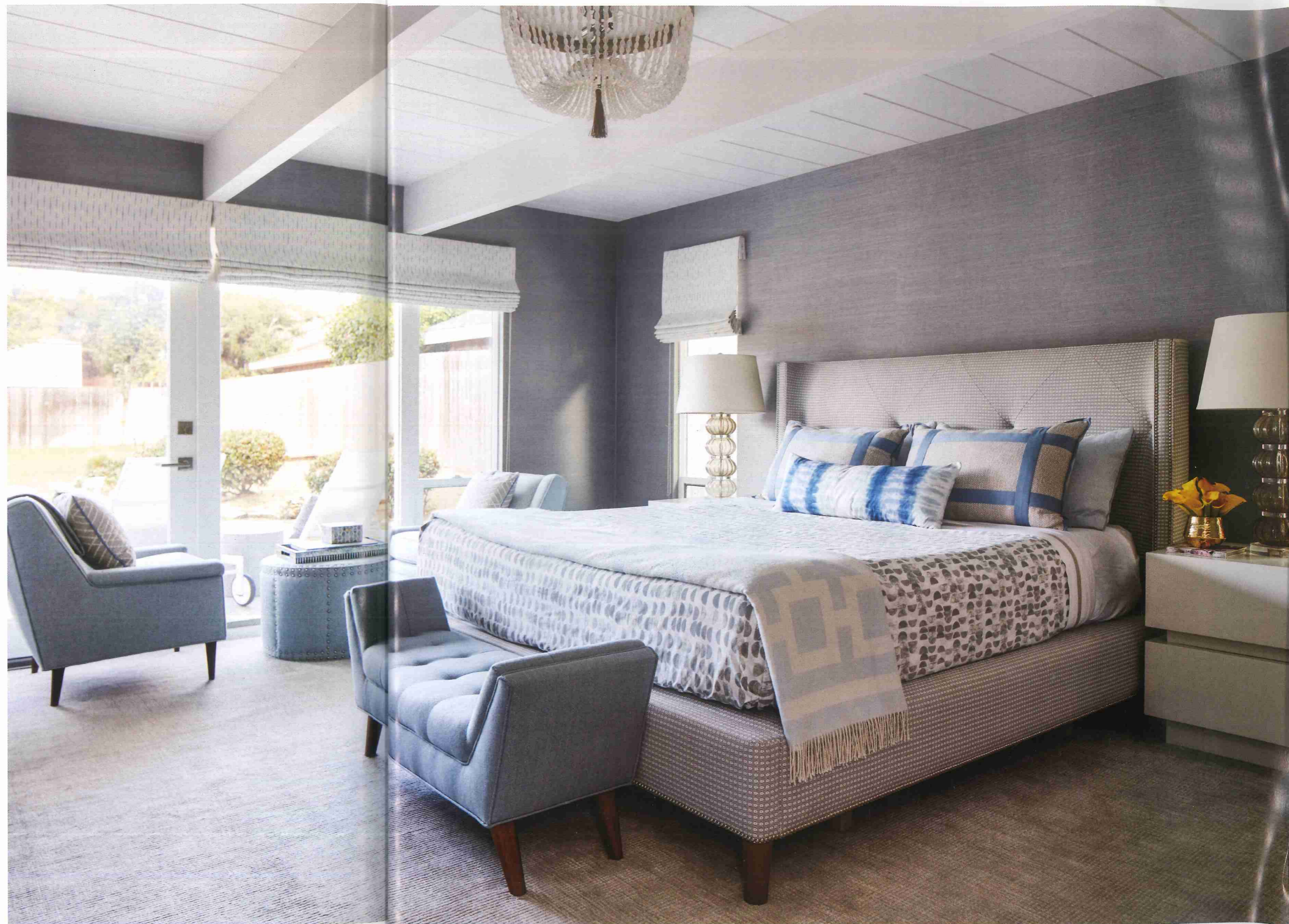




Denis' black-and-white photograph *Breathe* underlines the master bedroom's tranquility. The white-lacquered dresser, with its live-edge drawer fronts and walnut base, is by Lawson-Fenning.

live edge and unexpected acrylic base, performs a similar function. "It brings a lot of warmth and unpredictability," says Hohla. Across the room, Annie Wildey's dynamic painting *Splashing Roll*, hanging above a simple, orthogonal console lacquered in a powder blue hue, reinforces the home's coastal setting.

The living room's motifs—distinct blue, references to the sea, rustic textures and touches of shine—are echoed in the rest of home. In the dining room, blue appears on the Windsor-style chairs that cluster around the Saarinen table. Shimmer is found in the polished nickel rings of the chandelier overhead. Alex Hoerner's *Surface Tension*, which depicts a delicate bubble poised on a beach, is paired with the weave of a faux-raffia-covered sideboard. In the kitchen, these elements are reflected in the hue of the rectangular glass tiles, the sparkle of the honed-marble countertops and the cord-wrapped-back counter stools.



The master bedroom's balance of rustic and refined textures—the tactile grass-cloth wallpaper from Phillip Jeffries, a plush Stark carpet, lacquered nightstands by Lawson-Fenning, sensuous Arteriors glass lamps and the soft linen Kravet fabric used for the Roman shades—blend Parisian elegance with surf casual. Above is a Ro Sham Beaux chandelier.

ing a large rectangular concrete coffee table from Teak Warehouse, rope lounge chairs from West Elm, a white aluminum-framed RH sofa, and concrete drum table, also from Teak Warehouse, form an inviting on the covered patio. Underfoot is an outdoor rug from Janus et Cie.



Above: The spacious backyard was designed to accommodate the whole family, from lounging to entertaining. At Thanksgiving, it's transformed into the setting for the holiday meal. "We usually eat outside," says Corry. "We have a kids' table, a grown-up table and we'll rent a bouncy house for the children."

Left: One of the first orders of business for general contractor Marcelo Valdez was installing a new redwood fence at the front of the property. His firm also handled the landscape design and installation.

In the master bedroom, the home's signature shade softens the formal lines of the vintage club chairs, custom ottoman and the bench. Here again, the interplay of rustic and refined abounds: shiny lacquer and rough wood, clear crystal and smoky glass, grass-cloth walls and soft carpet. Emily Denis' black-and-white photograph *Breathe* underlines the room's tranquility. In the children's rooms, their own color choices coincidentally riff on those found elsewhere. For the son's room, blue turns a rich ocean turquoise; in the daughter's room, it's transformed into the lavenders and pinks that streak the sky at sunset.

The home's palette extends to the exterior, tying together indoors and out. The mix of spaces, perfect for entertaining, reinforce this residence as a place to relax and unwind with family and friends. "Every night, there's a sunset over the ocean. We put a fire pit out front and have people over and sit and watch," says Corry, adding, "and some of our best friends in the world live about two houses away." Just more confirmation that they made the right decision. **L**