

BEACH BLING

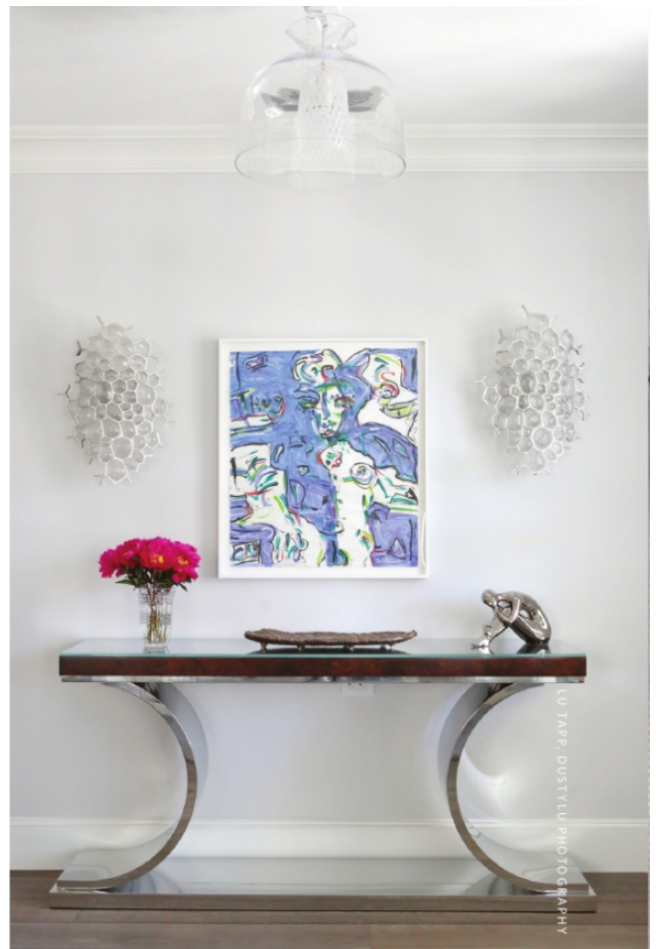
A CORONADO BEACH
HOUSE GLIMMERS WITH
HOLLYWOOD GLAMOUR

BY BONNIE NICHOLLS

CHIPPER HATTER







Chuck and Rita Steel pictured a beach house where a well-worn, 1970s ranch-style home in Coronado once stood — but not just any beach house. It had to be classy, artsy, reminiscent of the 1930s and '40s.

It needed, Chuck says, “a little bit of a pop to it, a little bit of glitz, a Hollywood Art Deco feel when you walk in — something of the past that looks good in the future.”

To carry out their vision, the couple turned to interior designer Denise LaVey. The three of them collaborated with architect Julian Ortega of URBANA Design Group over the next 13 months as the three-story, 6,000-square-foot house took shape.

Based in Los Angeles, Denise had worked with Chuck and Rita before, upgrading the interior design of their Cabo San Lucas vacation home. Chuck says their rapport with her was instant, so they knew just whom to hire for their latest project, which would be their permanent home.

Every Sunday, the three met for lunch at Hotel Del Coronado’s restaurant for members and reviewed material samples.

“Sundays were kind of our day — no stress, no traffic and great work days for us,” Denise says.

Originally from Northern California by way of New Jersey, Chuck and Rita have had summer homes in San Diego County for many years. Coronado, however, had a special pull. Chuck remembers discovering the “island” on his way to watch a Navy SEALs exercise with his brother during the July 4th weekend.

“I was coming over the bridge and thought I was going to Never Never Land,” he recalls. “It was like going into a snow globe.”

A guest to their new home might experience that same sense of beauty and wonder when crossing the threshold of their front door. Tasteful touches of Hollywood glamour glimmer throughout the beach house with

Above left: The front door of Chuck and Rita Steel’s Coronado home opens to soft walnut flooring that is barefoot friendly. Rods of movable plates in reflective, polished aluminum divide the entryway from the sitting room while keeping the spaces light and airy. Beach images taken by Italian photographer Massimo Vitali fit the setting.

Above right: The console table — featuring a steel base and a glass-covered, burl wood top — offers an elegant place to place keys upon entering the home. The painting, *Blue Angel*, is by Christopher Ciccone, brother of singer/songwriter Madonna.

Facing page: Interior designer Denise LaVey used a lot of gray throughout the home, referring to it as soothing and fresh at the same time. In the sitting room, taupe serves as the primary canvas for the armchairs, carpeting, walls and window coverings. A vintage chandelier of glass rods gleams above the coffee table.

Opening spread: A 1935 Packard 1201 Coupe convertible sits in the driveway, while Sunny the Labrador soaks up the rays on the front porch. The combination of classy and comfortable provides exactly what the couple wanted to achieve: a transitional beach house that infuses the grandeur of the silver screen.





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its solid walnut plank flooring and calming colors of gray, taupe and pastel blue.

Just inside the entryway, for example, floor-to-ceiling rods with polished aluminum plates act as a luminous yet subtle room divider between the sitting room and the foyer. Denise custom-designed the piece so that each plate pivots when touched.

"It's nice to have an artful wall," she says. "It's fun, isn't it?"

The gleaming steel base of the entryway table complements the room divider. Above the table perch playful wall sconces with a honeycomb-like pattern of translucent resin.

The second level serves as the home's main hub. An unobstructed view of the ocean from the balcony deck inspired Chuck and Rita to put the living/dining areas and kitchen here. When open completely, panoramic doors turn the interior space and deck into one airy room.

Clockwise from above: Lighted cabinets in the wardrobe showcase Rita's favorite shoes and handbags. A study in white and gray, the master bath offers a retreat of understated luxury. White wall paneling and a stone rug of marble, white Thassos and green glass bring sophistication to the master bath.

Facing page, clockwise from top: An open floor plan, typical of a beach house, combines the living room, dining room and kitchen on the second floor to take advantage of ocean views. A porch swing at the front door invites visitors to sit back and relax. Light blue chairs surround a live-edge, walnut dining table. The chandelier of laser-cut aluminum adds sparkle. A custom zinc range hood makes a bold statement in the kitchen.



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Under Denise's guidance, the space exudes a quiet elegance punctuated with understated bling. The sleek sophistication of wall paneling and the gray-and-white marble of the fireplace, kitchen counters, backsplash and island offset metallic, transparent and reflective materials that pop.

Shiny acrylic bases support a 10-foot-long, walnut dining table and nearby side tables. In the kitchen, the custom-designed, zinc range hood gives off a soft luster. A chandelier of asymmetrical crystal rods and another light fixture of laser-cut aluminum circles look like modern art.

"The chandelier is a statement piece, but it's not heavy," Denise says.

The second floor also houses the master suite. In the bedroom, vintage pineapple lamps of mercury glass sit atop custom-designed bedside tables of creamy green stingray skin inlaid with bone. Denise chose the upholstery for the bed, as well as for the wall behind it.

In the master bathroom, an exquisite stone rug of marble, white Thassos and green glass offers quiet beauty underfoot. Just beyond lies the walk-in wardrobe that

resembles a high-end boutique. Lighted, mirrored cabinets with glass shelving and doors display Rita's handbags, shoes and accessories. Denise custom-designed the cabinets to open up the space and reveal Rita's favorite things.

"Chuck and Rita did an excellent job of creating the beautiful displays," Denise says.

The couple's daughters, Marla, 14, and Madison, 17, got involved in the design of their rooms, which reside on the first floor. Madison, who studies ballet, wanted a New York loft theme, so Denise styled the space with brick walls, open shelving in dark wood and a light fixture with vintage-look bulbs. Marla's room is more contemporary, with softer hues, a clear-acrylic replica of Eero Aarnio's *Bubble Chair* and mirrored closet doors featuring an Art Deco design.

To get from floor to floor, the family can take the stairs or ride the elevator, a convenience perfect for aging grandparents and bringing groceries to the kitchen.

Chuck likes to take the elevator to the basement, where, in true Hollywood fashion, they have a home theater with Art Deco accents in polished aluminum. The theater

Above: An old movie plays on the 12-foot-wide screen in the flint- and cream-colored home theater. Art Deco designs and thin bands of polished aluminum accent the acoustic wall panels. Recessed lighting infuses the room with a muted glow.

Facing page, clockwise from top left: Above the shuffleboard table, framed vintage advertisements allude to yesteryear, while a spiky chandelier shouts "modern" in the spacious TV and game room downstairs. In the downstairs guest room, *Saturday Evening Post* prints coordinate with an orange desk lamp. Raffia wallpaper shimmers with a silver foil background. A nook in the TV and game room becomes the perfect place for Chuck and Rita's youngest daughter, Marla, to practice the drums. Artist Craig Alan painted tiny figures to provide the contours of Marilyn Monroe's face. White brick walls offset the dreamy quality of the drapes in daughter Madison's room.



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is outfitted with a 12-foot-wide, 160-inch-diagonal screen and padded acoustic wall paneling. Lighted steps and two long rows of comfy couch seating the color of flint complete the look.

"I never get tired of this room," says Chuck, who loves to come down here in his pajamas.

In another homage to Hollywood's Golden Age, Chuck owns a 1948 Ford Deluxe convertible and 1935 Packard 1201 Coupe convertible. He parks them in a two-level garage — with a custom lift — that accommodates four cars. Even out here, Denise helped Chuck and Rita honor the open, airy qualities of a beach house. On the back interior wall of the garage is a mural of the beach — with an LED frame around it.

"They like showy, they like bling, but there's a balance," Denise says. ❖

Clockwise from top left: Denise calls the funky downstairs guest room "the '70s room," with its melon-colored ottoman and bright orange pillows, throws, custom-upholstered beds and corner table. Silver in the rug complements the chandelier of capiz shells. Marla gravitated toward robin's egg blue and French vanilla yellow in her room. A bubble chair in the corner adds youthful whimsy. A ballerina, Madison chose white-painted brick walls and dark shelving to represent an urban New York vibe. Bright blue pillows pop against a gray bed.

Facing page: Plush, teal pillows rest on a neutral-colored bed in the master bedroom. Vintage pineapple lamps sit atop custom-designed bedside tables. Denise custom-upholstered all the beds in the house to suit the color palette of each room.

