



**STORIED HOME**  
The exterior of this waterfront modern beach cottage captures the charm of Balboa Island, with expanses of white clapboard, a swath of Cape Cod-meets-Solito gray across the midsection and landscaping that underscores its blend of old and new.

## Coast-Modernism

The reinvention of this Balboa Island abode shows you can artfully blend beach cottage with modern contemporary styling. | *By Carrie Storke Williams* |

As a Newport native who views Balboa (the “Big” and “Little” Balboa Islands, to be exact) as a place that evokes everything that makes this corner of the world charming, I have a bias when it comes to residential redux on these isles. I’m not a fan of building a French chateau, nor am I a fan of razing an original cottage to erect a sleek contemporary. So it was with dismay that, two years ago, I saw a cleared corner lot on Little Balboa—on the sought-after South Bayfront—with some of the best views around. Expecting a mini-Versailles, it was to my surprise to see something different on the horizon. Over the next 18 months, I watched the birth of a magnificently modern beach house, and I knew that I would share its secrets with our *Riviera* readers.

I arranged a private tour with Newport Beach interior designer Anne Michaelson. With more than two decades of experience, Michaelson leverages her education and classical training in art history, and environmental and interior design to create noteworthy residences. This project was no exception. “My clients... love Newport,” she says. “They’ve always been drawn to the seaside resort setting and also appreciated the timeless nature of its original beach houses. They also are world travelers, so they needed something with a bit more of a sophisticated edge.”

### Classic Coastal—Reinvented

Thus began a collaboration between Michaelson, her clients, architect Robert Sinclair and builder Ray Lewis, all of whom shared a common goal: Reinvent the classic beach house, in this case by elevating its elegance while preserving its charm, and adding a dose of modernism to appeal to the stylish sensibilities of its owners. The home’s exterior immediately conveys the success of this beach house/modern mashup. Soaring expanses of crisp white clapboard (set horizontally and close together, in the traditional style) adjoin expanses of windows. And a swath of Cape Cod-meets-Solito gray wraps the home’s midsection, hinting at its modern heart. A juxtaposition of landscape materials, from Newport Beach’s Bridget Skinner, also underscores the intersection of traditional and contemporary. Flowing beach grasses frame the residence’s front, while ornamental trees and sculpted rounds of boxwood flank the street. The unifying element? Sheer simplicity.

What isn’t simple, but is truly artful, is the balance that Michaelson has created, melding old and new, traditional and modern, beach and city. The dichotomies create an engagement in the environment here. “A little confusion is good,” says the designer. “It keeps people guessing, ‘Is it old?’ ‘Is it new?’”

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**ENCHANTED LIVING**  
Clockwise from left:  
An indoor/outdoor  
space; stunning  
views from the  
rooftop terrace;  
the heirloom kitchen

### What's Old is New Again

Nods to the previous home's provenance are evident in this entirely new abode, including the use of the original wood beams as mantels for the stone fireplaces in the living room and on the rooftop terrace. These beams are echoed on the living room ceiling, creating a seaside ambience that is further polished by the washed linen draperies embellished by hand-stitching done by the same artisans who sew for Dior.

Old and new continue to collide in the upstairs master sitting room and office, which offer views of the harbor, main channel, Balboa Pavilion and the ocean beyond. Here, glass from recycled bottles finds a new home as fireplace cladding. In the master bath, custom takes on a Venetian vanity mirror and vintage-inspired chrome sconces invoke Old World and mid 20th century designs.

### Ship to Shore

The idea of heirloom elements is carried subtly through the home, so as not to tip the scales too much in favor of a quintessential beach cottage and thus upset the coast-modern balance. In most cases, the modern "heirlooms" are used to refer to the home's nautical setting, with custom sconces on the living room bookcases from Lantern Masters, which hearken ship lighting. And, in the living room, a pair of wood-and-rope Belgian lounge chairs from Mimi London honors the harborfront home in a contemporary way.

Other allusions to coastal living are made with the home's color palette and finishes. The Dutch-style front door is crafted in a texture and hue that recalls sea-tossed driftwood. This play on woods also is seen on the wet bar and in the plank flooring on the residence's second level. In the kitchen, an artisan-crafted mosaic glass backsplash is composed in hues of sea and sky, and cabinets are fronted in sandblasted

glass that recalls washed-ashore treasures. This sandblasted glass is used in the interior doors and on neighbor-facing windows to let in filtered sunlight, while allowing for privacy.

In the living room, a Seagrass limestone floor—custom-honed in Italy—has been distressed to feel divine underfoot as well as to display the fossilized shells buried within. This motif continues on the third-level roof terrace, which features handpainted tile floors that shimmer with bits of crushed shells and a giant clamshell sink in the powder room.

"The use of materials and colors that reference the home's incomparable setting on Newport Harbor serves to draw your eyes continuously outward, through the home, to the spectacular views," says Michaelsen.

### Rooms With a View

This residence is reverent to its breathtaking views, honoring them through intelligent design. On the main level, an open floor plan merging the living room with the foyer and eat-in kitchen allows the views to be enjoyed from all of these spaces. Making the savoring of the scenery even more seamless are two walls of glass that open from the living room to the bayfront terrace, creating a large indoor/outdoor space for entertaining.

But the pièce de résistance of this coast-modern abode is its third-level rooftop terrace—an amenity that wasn't allowed on Balboa until recently. Designed to function as an outdoor apartment, the terrace encompasses a Moroccan daybed, a kitchen, a living room with a stone fireplace and a bathroom—and boasts views that stretch from CdM to the jetty, from Fashion Island to the Balboa Pavilion, and from the Main Channel to Catalina. It's somehow appropriate that this home was among the first to capitalize on these 360-degree views. After all, it represents the classic beach house coming full circle. **B**



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