



# *fresh* connection

OVERLOOKING THE PACIFIC, A CORONA DEL MAR HOME  
INFUSED WITH ORGANIC TOUCHES LINKS INSIDE AND  
OUTSIDE WITH STUNNING RESULTS.

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ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIOR DESIGN / ERIC OLSEN, ERIC OLSEN DESIGN  
HOME BUILDER / ROSS SAVAGE, KRS DEVELOPMENT INC.  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / CHRIS FENMORE, GARDEN STUDIO DESIGN





Architect Eric Olsen chose burnished Merlex stucco, cedar siding and shingles, and board-form concrete to create a warm, modern palette for owners Thomas and Bette Vovan's Corona del Mar home. Landscape designer Chris Fenmore played off the home's contemporary aesthetic, opting for clean, straight lines, monochromatic colors and low-maintenance plantings.

I think of architecture as a framework," says Eric Olsen. "It should be subtle and interact with the landscape so the two can come together and create something beautiful." The architect recently applied that philosophy to Thomas and Bette Vovan's Corona del Mar home, situated on a dazzling parcel overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Making sure every aspect of his design embraced the cinematic sweep of the vista, Olsen crafted a home that is at once strikingly modern yet comfortable and welcoming for his clients.

The Vovans, who have three children, had been living in Bonita Canyon for almost 10 years before discovering an idyllic property for sale in Spyglass Hill. The lot was ideal, but the existing house, which was composed of compartmentalized rooms with little in the way of indoor-outdoor connection, was not. The couple purchased the property and then called Olsen. "A good friend of ours recommended Eric," Bette explains. "We thought about remodeling what was there, but we sat down and, based on the changes we wanted to make, it made more sense to tear down and start over."

With a blank canvas at their disposal, the Vovans requested that the new house have plenty of fluid space to suit their close-knit family. "I wanted big open areas where we could cook, eat dinner or watch television and be together," says Bette, who also asked for simple architecture with clean lines. "If everything is calm, you can better appreciate the view. I told Eric I wanted to capture as much of it as possible throughout the whole house." Olsen not only captured the view, but he tied the house to it, too: A massive glass slider at the rear connects the living, dining and kitchen areas to the backyard terrace and the ocean beyond. "It opens up the entire space so there isn't a clear





**Left:** Chiseled-limestone floors from Materials Marketing pave a corner in the living area. Joining the midcentury hoop-style chair are a faux-fur throw and a Jonathan Adler brass floor lamp, which doubles as an art display.

**Opposite:** The front door from Model Glass & Mirror opens to a skylighted entry where chandeliers by Schoolhouse Electric & Supply Co. hang from reclaimed-oak ceiling beams. Olsen appointed the open living area adjacent to the kitchen with a sofa from Design Within Reach and a coffee table from RH.





In the living area, a Western Window Systems glass slider from Associated Building Supply connects the house to its ocean landscape. A work from SCAPE hangs near the television surround clad in wood from The Vintage Wood Floor Company. The console, lamps and carpet are from 503 Found; the Eames-designed lounge chair and ottoman are from Design Within Reach.



delineation between outside and inside,” says the architect, who employed a second large glass door in the master bedroom for a similar effect, as well as generous windows in all of the rooms to best frame the scenery.

While the rear of the house showcases fantastic transparency, the front is a modernist display of opaque rectilinear forms punctuated by an entrance courtyard that also serves as a space for entertaining and play. “The back terrace is very long and narrow and is primarily used for taking in the ocean,” notes landscape designer Chris Fenmore. “The front courtyard is a more traditional yard with grass, a board-form concrete fireplace and a big tree where the clients can hang a swing. And, I picked an old-growth olive tree with a gnarled trunk that balances the straight lines of the architecture.”

Olsen wrapped the linear forms of the exterior in various materials that counter each other and offer a layered textural experience. “Most of the walls are a white burnished stucco,” the architect says. “I warmed that up with a cedar-shingle roof and cedar siding on the garage doors and the room above the garage.” That loft-like area functions as a hangout for the Vovan children and is the only upper-level space in the otherwise single-story home. “The site is on a hill,” says Ross Savage, the project’s general contractor. “We dug down another 4 feet or so to accommodate the loft, while meeting the HOA’s view requirements.”

Rich materiality defines the interiors, too. “My clients wanted clean lines, but they also wanted something organic,” he says. “They’re a family with young kids, so it wouldn’t make sense if everything was perfectly polished. The forms are angular and modern; they needed warm textures to help soften them.” In the entry and the kitchen and dining area, the architect crossed the long rectangular skylights with reclaimed-oak ceiling beams to further add warmth and texture. In the living room, he covered the fire surround with reclaimed-wood panels that offset the basalt hearth and the chiseled-limestone flooring.

Olsen sees a house as framework not just for the landscape but for furniture, too. “I always think about the furniture as I design the architecture,” he says. “I even draw it into the plan.” He opted for some modernist classics: An Eames lounge chair and ottoman rest near the living room



Tulip chairs from Design Within Reach and Panton side chairs offer a striking contrast to the wood table and bench from RH in the dining area. An oil painting by Deborah M. Allen from 503 Found hangs above a stained white-oak built-in cabinet designed by Olsen and fabricated by Miller’s Woodworking.





**Left:** Natural light pours through the rectilinear skylight crossed with reclaimed-wood beams. Olsen sourced the kitchen's Sub-Zero and Wolf appliances from Pacific Sales Kitchen & Home. Fixtures by California Faucets from Ferguson punctuate the island.

**Opposite:** A collection of Tom Dixon-designed pendants hangs above the kitchen's Caesarstone-topped island, where RH barstools gather. The painted-white brick wall above the stove plays off the smooth basalt countertop from Ollin Stone.





fireplace, and Saarinen and Panton chairs gather around the dining table. In contrast, the architect designed an oak platform bed for the master bedroom—it's a piece that anchors the voluminous space. And for the dining area, he conceived a built-in oak cabinet, and placed a wood dining table and bench that are as stately as they are rustic. The table and a low-profile, deep sofa covered in soft white fabric in the living area exemplify California living at its most beautiful. "They're casual and comfortable," Olsen says. "Most people want something modern, but a little bit of ruggedness makes the house more livable."

A muted palette throughout most of the house directs attention toward the view and evokes a feeling of serenity. But never forgetting about balance and the fact that there are exceptions to every rule, Olsen dressed a room shared by the two younger children with vibrant color and whimsy. "I hung these colorful hot-air balloons and found little globes that I painted," Olsen also outfitted the room with a yellow-and-white rug, a red armchair and a turquoise side table, all designed by Jonathan Adler. "What I do is a big deal," the architect says. "People have worked hard the majority of their lives to build their dream house, and I'm the person who gets to help them achieve that. I get to create space that enhances their lives and makes them happy." **L**

**Above:** European-oak flooring from Warren Christopher leads into the powder room. A mirror from 503 Found hangs above a cantilevered basalt counter supporting a stone basin from Big Daddy's Antiques. The fixtures are by California Faucets.

**Left:** A double-sided board-form concrete fireplace anchors the den, where a sofa, side chair and armchair, all from Jonathan Adler, make for a stylish seating area. The rug and coffee table are from 503 Found. Views into the landscape, installed by Instant Landscape, can be glimpsed from the space.



Creating a peaceful, serene environment drove Olsen's concept for the master bedroom. Bocci pendants from Lumens Light + Living flank the custom platform bed. The lounge chairs on the adjacent terrace are from Gloster; the table is from Teak Warehouse.



**Above:** Pendants by Schoolhouse Electric & Supply Co. hang above a custom mirror in the master bathroom. General contractor Ross Savage oversaw the installation of the Caesarstone countertop and California Faucets fixtures.

**Left:** A large corner window in the master bathroom brings the outside in. The sculptural Victoria + Albert tub is from Ferguson, and the tub filler is from California Faucets. The basket filled with towels is from 503 Found.