

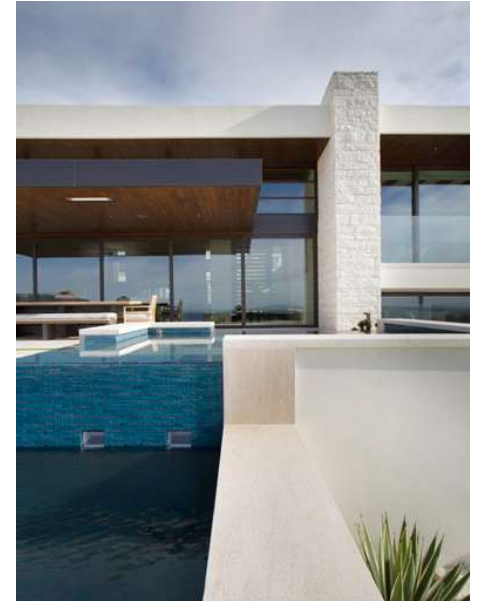
WESTWARD HOME

A DANA POINT COMPOUND
BLENDS CONTEMPORARY LINES
WITH COWBOY INSPIRATION

By Alexandria Abramian
Photos by Darlene Halaby

As far as home design unions go, the pairing was far from typical. On one side of the aisle was the clients' penchant for Western design and art; on the other, the property's enviable oceanfront location at The Strand in Dana Point.

A range of outdoor areas includes an intimate firepit nook located below the more expansive main pool area.



Presiding over the project were two of Orange County's top design talents, architect Geoff Sumich and interior designer Sue Capelli, and builder Russ Schwinn. "Throughout this project, the entire thought process was, 'How do we create a contemporary home with Western flair?' We know we didn't just want a Western home," says Capelli, who along with Sumich, worked with the clients to build the home from the ground up.

The key to the process turned out to be a small painting the clients owned that depicted running horses rendered in pale colors. "We contacted the artist of that piece to make a similar painting but on a larger scale for the living room," says Capelli. "We did it before the house was even built and it ended up providing the direction for the entire rest of the home with its soft and soothing colors and overall peaceful feeling with just a little bit of that Western look."

Today, the 5,000-square-foot, recently completed home manifests that original spark of inspiration: an ocean-facing compound that feels grand and intimate at once.

Outdoor furniture, including lounges and dining table and chairs, are from David Sutherland.



Counters and kitchen backsplash create a textured canvas against which the turquoise stools and stove pop. The living room painting commissioned for the home inspired much of the design direction throughout. White rift oak panels are used throughout.



“This house is split-level with two stories on one side and one story on the other,” says Sumich. “The great space is on the one-story side and has 14-foot ceilings with floor-to-ceiling glass on the view side, split in half by the exterior canopy, which cuts out all glare in the space. The kitchen and dining room also inhabit this voluminous space but achieve intimacy with a canopy I suspended from the ceiling.”

When it came to integrating Western motifs, Sumich says that he opted for more abstract, less literal references to the concept without trailing into “theme-y” design. “I incorporated this direction by using references to Western architecture in an abstract way,” he says. “Both interior and exterior walls are wood board and batten like you would see on the side of a barn, but done in a very smooth wood varnish finish to give a sophisticated look and feel.” Even the exterior’s striking use of stone contains a subtle nod to the West, melding cowboy and coastal idioms into a single idea: “I approached the exterior stone work in the same way, using a grout-less tumbled Texas limestone laid in a linear horizontal fashion to mimic the horizontal stratification you see in the mountains of Arizona,” says the architect.

Horse and cowboy images mingle easily with limestone and wood finishes and mostly neutral furniture. Neither the Western nor the contemporary elements appear to dominate the visual conversation, instead fusing into a single union of clean lines and textured depth.





Details like the almost-white pony wall add texture and depth while high-impact black and white Western photographs make a graphic statement that echoes striking elements like the staircase instead of working against them. “Touches like the pony wall are a way to bring in a feeling without making it obvious. We already had white oak in the hallway and walnut in the living room, so we didn’t want any more wood,” says Capelli of the decision to texture the walls with squares of pony hide that complement the limestone tones with a contrasting tactile value.

Throughout the home, Capelli used sourced seating from Mimi London and Baker to create a soothing sanctuary that would complement the clients’ art and treasures like a hand-carved pool table.



This isn't to say that the entire project hearkened to horse trails and lassos. There is also the enviable coastal location and the ocean views, which Sumich brought into almost every room of the home. Small punches of turquoise also incorporate the Pacific vibe within. "The client loves that color," says Capelli of touches such as the statement-making La Cornue stove and kitchen barstools. "That was the punch of color throughout," she says, adding that she kept ocean views as uninterrupted as possible. "There is no formal dining room in this house—just the kitchen and the nook. So the outside is more like the formal dining room, but we didn't want chairs all the way around the table because of the view. When you're in the living room you don't want a chair interrupting the sight line. Benches help keep that sight line uninterrupted."

Located under a canopy that extends off the living room, built-in heaters mean that oceanfront dining happens year-round as a celebration of form and function. Says Sumich, "I love the warmth and soul this house has, which is a testament to the love and collaborative effort of the whole team." ■



In the master suite, Capelli designed the custom bed from Design by Passione rests in front of a leather-upholstered wall. Silver Siena travertine lines the master bathroom walls and shower.



Right: "I truly enjoyed working with Sue Capelli and Geoff Sumich, as they are both creative and passionate about what they do," says builder Russ Schwinn. "We worked well together as a team. They are consummate professionals who are the very best of their industries!"



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Above: Designer Sue Capelli stands in front of artwork commissioned for the space by Ken Peloke.
Left: Architect Geoff Sumich.