

GRAND GESTURE



Constructed on one of the most commanding hilltops in Crystal Cove, this Northern Italian-inspired estate took a total of five years to complete.

Warmth, elegance, and opulence: Interior designer Sue Capelli recruits an all-star design cast to create a next-level estate in Crystal Cove

By Alexandria Abramian
Photography by Chad Mellon



Inlaid limestone floors with a highly symmetrical stair design create a fittingly grand first impression in the entry foyer.



It isn't every day that a designer works on a canvas as commanding at this 26,000-square-foot estate perched high in the hills of Crystal Cove. But Sue Capelli, founder of Passione Interior Design, has built a reputation for realizing homes of this magnitude.

The living room features detailed ceiling design as well as expansive windows that look out to sweeping ocean views.

For this Northern Italian-inspired estate, Capelli created a strategic approach that accentuated soaring ceilings, arched galleries, and expansive spaces while also creating a sense of intimate comfort and even coziness. Key to the concept was focusing as much attention on the floor plan as the stunningly crafted ceilings that rest above.

Today, the home toggles between big-statement



spaces and more intimate ones. The grand foyer, where mirrored, sweeping staircases make for a cinematic opening act, Capelli heightened that sense of drama with white limestone floors inlaid with a black pattern. Above, a large-scale chandelier designed by Capelli cascades down from an inset ceiling. Nearby, the formal living room echoes that elevated style with large-scale seating and a largely symmetrical floor plan. On one wall, Capelli installed a massive marble fountain. “We wanted to hear the sound of water,” she says. “When you open the doors and see the ocean and hear the water, it is very serene and peaceful.”

A large-scale, black marble fountain in the formal living room creates a striking design statement as well as an auditory experience designed to complement the ocean views. The room’s overhead lighting piece is designed by Sue Capelli.



In the kitchen, Sue opted for the rich warmth of rift-sawn oak. Appliances are by Wolf, Sub-Zero and Miele. All cabinetry is designed by Sue and built by JT Finneran, Inc., of Santa Ana.



When it comes to other areas in the house, however, Capelli modulated her use of materials and finishes to foster a feeling of less formality, and more coziness. In the kitchen, for example, she opted for rift oak floors with Calcutta marble counters and backsplash. “I cook, so I like a kitchen to be functional,” she says.

In the bedrooms, Capelli captures a sense of elegant whimsy with floral patterns, soft textiles, and a quietly modulating palette of soothing colors.

“We wanted an elegant look but cozy since they have young children, so we brought the warmth in through color and rugs in certain areas,” says Capelli, who spent a total of five years to complete what is now a highly personalized estate. ☐



Using a rich palette of crystal, stone, metals, and other elements, Sue created a series of stunning, custom lighting pieces throughout the home.



In both the primary suite and guest bedrooms, Capelli created garden-inspired, whimsical environments with soft tones, hand-painted and embroidered wall coverings, and a mix of tactile fabrics.

Sue Capelli
Passione Inc.
9550 Research Drive
Irvine
949.336.7800
passioneinc.com

RHA
3337 Michelson Drive, Suite 170
Irvine
949.655.1550
roberthidey.com