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A Dewey Beach getaway takes design cues from sunny California, with indoor-outdoor living in mind

golden STATE

Text by CATHERINE FUNKHOUSER



Previous spread: The great room spills onto the main deck through sliding-glass panels from Western Window Systems. Randall Mars employed an eight-foot overhang to provide sun protection and an opening in the stucco wall that welcomes sea breezes. Arlene Critzos created a lounge area around an RH fire pit. This page: In the dining area, recessed ceiling lights cast a glow on a Jitka Skuhrava sculpture hanging over the chamcha-wood table. The kitchen (opposite) features cabinets from Plain & Fancy; Old Wood Delaware supplied walnut panels for the base cabinets, island and hood.

PREVIOUS SPREAD & OPPOSITE: ANICE HOACHLANDER; THIS PAGE: GEOFFREY HODGDON



Drive along the Delaware shore and one thing becomes clear: Shingle-style architecture dominates the residential scene. Though many homeowners in the area covet a coastal New England vibe, one couple envisioned something altogether different for their weekend escape—and turned West for design inspiration.

The Potomac, Maryland, pair looked past the tired, existing cottage when they purchased a Dewey Beach lot within a block of the ocean in 2017. Planning to build anew, they asked architect Randall Mars and designer Arlene Critzos to define and execute their non-traditional vision for a family retreat.

“They wanted a modern beach house, but that could have gone many ways,” says Mars. “I had in mind a California Modern home with lots of glass. The idea was to open up the interior to the outdoors.”

That desired connection—and the tight, 5,000-square-foot parcel—shaped the three-story plan. Other functional must-haves included an office for the husband, a commercial real-estate developer, and separate en-suite bedrooms for each of their three teenage

children. From the get-go, it was a given that friends of all ages and extended family would visit often. “The site had some constraints and the program had many requirements,” recounts Mars. “It took some work to get everything to fit.”

First, the architect bucked convention by setting the open living/dining/kitchen sweep, along with the master suite, on the second floor. The entry level houses the kids’ bedrooms and hangout space, plus a guest room. The loft office sits on the third floor, which accesses a rooftop deck and ocean-facing, side balcony. “Functionally, the layout works perfectly,” notes Mars. “We wanted to raise the main living space for better views.”

Mars captured the essence of the Golden State’s vernacular—and oodles of natural light—with a 25-foot span of glass doors across the width of the great room. When open, the rolling panels disappear into a pocket, effectively erasing the indoor-outdoor line. “The

ARCHITECTURE: **Randall Mars**, AIA, Randall Mars Architects, McLean, Virginia. INTERIOR DESIGN: **Arlene Critzos**, **Joyce Pearl** and **Catherine Belkov**, Interior Concepts, Inc., Annapolis, Maryland. BUILDER: Garrison Homes, Lewes, Delaware.



The living area evokes a California spirit, with casual furnishings and vast expanses of glass. Its 11-foot ceiling adds to the sense of airiness. The linear Montigo fireplace sheathed in soapstone fits the clean aesthetic.



“When you use steel and concrete, you want to add some warm, organic elements.”

ARLENE CRITZOS

whole main floor, inside and outside the doors, is an entertaining space,” explains the architect. “There’s a continuity, which is perfect for big gatherings.”

Beyond glass, the exterior mixes various materials: Concrete and ipe reinforce the modern ethos, while white stucco lends a beachy feel. Indoor materials sustain the architectural aesthetic. Concrete reappears in floor and wall panels; soapstone covers the living area’s fireplace and television wall. An open-riser staircase, mixing walnut with steel, connects the three levels.

The wife, a technology entrepreneur, requested a sleek white kitchen, warmed up with natural wood. To achieve her ideal in his cabinetry design, Mars sourced milky glass on the upper perimeter; walnut for the base perimeter, island and hood; and high-gloss, painted wood on the appliance wall.

Outfitting the home’s seven bathrooms, the team sought surfaces that adhered to the wife’s preferred palette of gray and white. Dynamic materials, such as the richly veined marble on the wall of the master bath, add personality.

Critzos and her team at Interior Concepts had previously appointed the couple’s primary residence in Tuscan style. But for their modern getaway, the owners sought streamlined interiors that



TOP, LEFT & RIGHT: ANICE HOACHLANDER; BOTTOM: GEOFFREY HODGDON



Opposite, clockwise from top, left: A mix of concrete, ipe and white stucco defines the home’s exterior. The mahogany front door and sidelites welcome guests. Clerestory and picture windows on the stairway usher in sunlight. This page, clockwise from top: The first-floor kids’ hangout combines a crisp-white sectional with rustic wood accents. Concrete panels with stainless-steel studs line the stair wall. The hanging sculpture by Jitka Skuhrava assembles hand-blown-glass discs. In the main-level powder room, ceramic wall tiles with random metal insets mimic stones, lending an organic quality.

TOP & BOTTOM, LEFT: GEOFFREY HODGDON; BOTTOM, CENTER & RIGHT: ANICE HOACHLANDER



The scene-stealing Skuhrava sculpture (above) is on full display as one ascends to the third-floor loft office. Concrete floor panels used throughout the house extend into the spa-like master bath (right), where Bianco Venato marble from Architectural Ceramics serves as a luxe backdrop for the custom vanity. Critzos outfitted the master bedroom (opposite) in shades of white and gray, with “pops of Hermès orange” to satisfy the wife’s penchant for sparing use of color. A viscose-polyester-blend rug, featuring a mottled abstract pattern, anchors the space.



PHOTOS: ANICE HOACHLANDER



would feel more at home in the hills of Hollywood than in Tuscany. “Their Potomac house is very different,” reveals Critzos. “Here, they wanted a clean, contemporary look.”

White walls provide a crisp backdrop for laid-back furniture in soft neutrals. Prioritizing comfort and ease, the team kept their choices practical and family-friendly, says the designer. The living area’s sectional sofa, covered in a terrycloth-like chenille, seats a crowd. The gray-toned-wood dining table and chairs boast a forgiving, wire-brushed finish.

A smattering of earthy accents balances industrial details. Take the primavera-wood coffee table and fitch artwork in the kids’ quarters, for example. As Critzos notes, “When you use steel and concrete, you want to add some warm, organic elements.”

To complete their new spaces, the owners commissioned two hanging-glass sculptures from Czech artist Jitka Skuhrava. The artist’s husband flew over to install the bespoke pieces—one above the dining table and another from the double-height ceiling at the loft end of the great room. The latter comprises a cluster of translucent, hand-blown plates, an effect Mars likens to “a smack of jellyfish.” It’s a fitting final touch for this coastal vacation home. ■

SOURCES OF NOTE

Great Room Sliding Glass Doors & Clerestory Windows: westernwindow.com through thesanderscompany.com. Range & Ovens: subzero-wolf.com. Master Bath Marble Wall Tile: architecturalceramics.com. Kitchen & Bath Cabinets: plainfancycabinetry.com through ahfdesigns.com.