

ARTISTIC TOUCH

A bicoastal couple fills their home with personal artwork, collected finds and cozy zones for entertaining and surf-watching.

WRITTEN BY JENNIE NUNN | PHOTOGRAPHED BY MEGHAN BEIERLE-O'BRIEN



Boston-based couple Cecelia and Jim Rappaport dreamed of someday owning a home in Southern California near the ocean. When Cecelia, a self-taught artist, and Jim, a real estate investor, stumbled upon a three-story, 2,400-square-foot home one block from The Strand in Manhattan Beach, they knew they had to have it.

"It was a really magical find, and it's very difficult to find places in Manhattan Beach," says Cecelia. "I really loved California, and our kids are all grown and gone [one is in Santa Monica, one in the Valley and one in Massachusetts]. I love the ocean and the breezes. I felt much more inspired out here,

and to find this house was a real treat."

Initially, the 3-bedroom, 3½-bath residence lacked a substantial exterior front entry, so Cecelia designed an iron gate and planted inviting greenery. She also enlisted an artist friend, Steve Hallmark, to build a portable art station to allow her to enjoy ocean views while she paints on the third floor.

"It's 8 feet long by 4 feet high with a collapsible work shelf," says Cecelia, a mixed media artist who sells her artwork on her website, ceceliacatherinerappaportcontemporaryart.com. "It is on casters so I can move it easily to take advantage of the best light."

For the interiors, Cecelia knew she needed help with the design. "We have high ceilings

on the second floor, so right away it felt like it was more sophisticated and not a beach feel," she says. "I like black-and-white, and I love the rustic and vintage look." With a busy travel schedule and trips back and forth from their home in Boston, Cecelia waited six months before beginning the design process.

It all began with a walk past Manhattan Beach home boutique Dacha Interiors. "When I first moved in, I didn't have a lot of time and I didn't have a lot of resources. I wanted to focus on painting," explains Cecelia of the store owned and curated by decorator Lauren Alexander. "I kept walking by Dacha, and I loved everything in the shop. She has all these artifacts and sources that I

love. I knew I couldn't wait any longer."

The first few times Cecelia went into the store, however, Lauren wasn't there. Later when Lauren came to the house for a design consultation, a friendship quickly sparked.

"She's one of the most gracious and warm people I've ever met, and she was open to anything. It was just easy," shares Lauren. "The original intention was to focus on the living room and the master; ultimately we've done the whole house. She really wanted landing places where they could entertain and people could sit and hang out but also make it functional for Jim. It was an exciting project to not have to tone anything down or scale back, and we were totally on the same

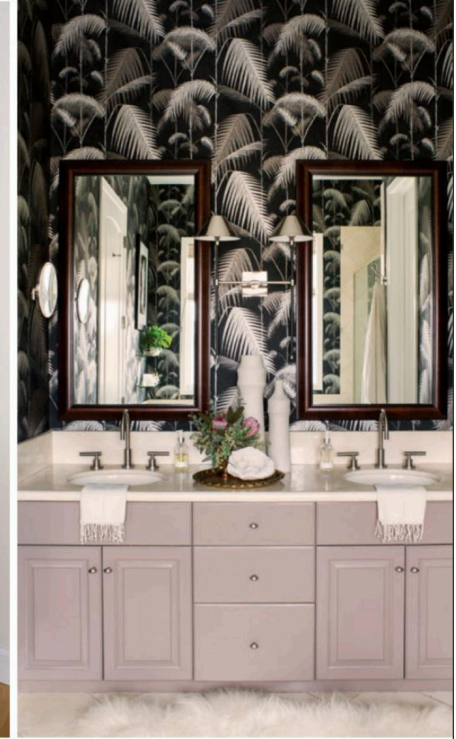
page. She wanted a home that felt coastal but that also felt global and traveled."

Lauren knew this would be different than some of her other projects. "Their lifestyle isn't that of many of my other clients [young families living in more of a surf/beach culture]. They have a lovely art collection as well as treasures collected from their travels, and their sensibility is more eclectic and global—which is why Cecelia found Dacha appealing," she says.

Lauren continues: "We definitely didn't shy away from a coastal vibe, especially in the living room upstairs, which incorporates a lot of natural materials [linen and seagrass], plants and an earthy color

palette. But we did push past that in other rooms—such as the master bed and bath, where we went more glam/sexy with luxe materials and finishes and a warmer color palette, and in the den, which is completely atypical of what one sees at the coast."

In the master bedroom, Lauren took cues from an existing brown marble fireplace that anchored the space. "The fireplace really spoke to me, and I thought we could go a little darker and moodier in the space," she says. The room is layered with hand-marbled silk pillows by Rule of Three (available at Dacha), jeweled nightstands by Roar + Rabbit for West Elm; a Keil wall sconce by Aerin for Visual Comfort; and a SOUTHBAY (Black



& Beige)—an acrylic/India ink/graphite/charcoal on canvas by Kieva Campbell.

The adjacent master bath features a bold, black-and-white wallcovering (Palm Jungle by Cole & Son) with a Havana sconce by Arteriors, and one of Cecelia's own nude drawings. "Powder rooms are a fantastic place to take risks," says Lauren. "It's fun to do something bold and unexpected in a small space like a powder room."

Throughout the home, pieces of Cecelia's own artwork are intermingled with works by her favorite artists including oil paintings by Tony Curtis, H.C. Hubbell and Tanya Doskova.

In the half bath on the third floor, they created an eye-catching gallery wall.

"Since we didn't go full-tilt beachy anywhere else in the house, I thought, 'OK, let's do it here,'" explains Lauren. "The Rappaports already had several pieces of art that felt ocean-inspired; it became really impactful when grouped together in this small space. So we added a grass cloth wall covering and filled the walls with an eclectic mix of abstract paintings and prints, traditional seascapes and photographs—some framed and some unframed. The overall effect is very fun and whimsical."

The landing at the top of the stairs features a marquetry-style surfboard made of mahogany, zebra wood, Brazilian cherry, ebony and pine by Lauren's father, Dick Gregory—a dentist and surfboard shaper. "My absolute favorite thing in the house is the surfboard," says Cecelia. "It's a sophisticated representation of the surfing community in Manhattan Beach."

For the kitchen—a main gathering spot in the home—an existing turquoise fabric on the banquette was removed and replaced with a quieter fabric with neutral tones (Ink Blot by Porter Teleo for Perennials) and

topped with vintage textile pillows available at Dachä. They outfitted the space with Hoffman chairs from Design Within Reach, a framed palm print found at local fundraiser Walk With Sally, and a custom, pie-shaped maple table with a steel base by Matt Tafava of Cactus, Inc.

Another popular hangout is the living room, lined with a sofa from H.D. Buttercup, a vintage travertine coffee table from Bullock's department store dating to the 1960s, and a Pehuen llama wool throw blanket from Dachä.

The biggest design surprise, though, was

the den—an office space intended for Jim. In about two weeks, Cecelia and Lauren transformed the existing wood-paneled room into an office and extra guest room with a space-saving, trundle-style sleeper, sconces by Barbara Barry for Circa Lighting, custom pillows by Kelly Wearstler for Groundworks and a vintage Persian rug.

"I love this room," says Lauren. "Initially Jim insisted that we leave it alone because it was his 'safe space.' But while he was away on a business trip for about two weeks, we installed shelving, cabinets and a built-in desk in the same style (molding, wood detail and

stain), so the effect is seamless. The room is very warm and inviting for guests, and it also feels masculine and like a proper den for Jim, who is originally from Boston. I was a bit nervous about what his reaction would be, but he absolutely loves it... thankfully."

Now when in town from Boston, the Rappaports are right at home. "We enjoy spending time with our family, close friends and neighbors when we are in Manhattan Beach," says Cecelia. "I wanted to be able to hear the ocean from every room in the house, and I have it. It's a dream." ■