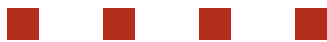


# *Southern Exposure*



*Dream team creates a dream home  
on a quiet beach in San Diego*





OPPOSITE: This remodeled Pacific Beach home by architect Bruce Peeling makes maximum use of a small lot overlooking Sail Bay. THIS PAGE: The home's rooftop room is a favorite spot for the homeowners to dine and relax. Fireplace and floor are quartzite. Galvanized-steel barstools are from Pottery Barn. Not shown is the space's full kitchen.

## Something was wrong. ■ ■ ■ ■

The view from the little deck atop the home's copper-clad tower was a jaw-dropper, to be sure. In sunset's golden glow, the slice of sandy beach that defined the cozy cove below resembled a freshly baked croissant. And out in the glassy, steel-blue waters of Sail Bay were the boat center on Santa Clara Point and the Mission Bay Yacht Club, anchored on El Carmel Point. Beyond poked Bahia Point and in the background lay Point Loma and, to the southeast, the San Diego skyline.



The view was breathtaking, but something was wrong.

Oh, of course! The view was not wrong – just unfamiliar. This sleek, highly intelligent and superbly crafted house in Pacific Beach faced south.

So what? you ask.

Michael Thiemann spent three years looking for this little pie-shaped lot. One of the mighty lures was its southern exposure – its very rare southern exposure.

We looked at a lot of sites, and I think this is one of only 25 to 30 beachfront houses in San Diego that look south, Thiemann said.

Beach lots facing south are cherished because they have all the upside and virtually none of the downside of west-facing lots – most notably the unrelenting glare of the afternoon sun. On their lot Thiemann and wife Catherine found a 50-year-old one-story home built around a courtyard. The house was too small for their growing family, so they decided to build up. The vertical expansion added not only living space, but also created spectacular new viewpoints.

For the remodel, the homeowners retained architect Bruce Peeling, who has collected a houseful of awards, many of them from this magazine. Then two more prize





**OPPOSITE TOP:** For the courtyard, the design team chose sturdy, easy-maintenance materials such as copper for the door and columns, stainless steel for the railings, gauged quartzite for the floor and Rajah slate for the fountain that homeowner Catherine Thiemann designed. Bridge with stainless-steel railings leads to children's bedrooms.

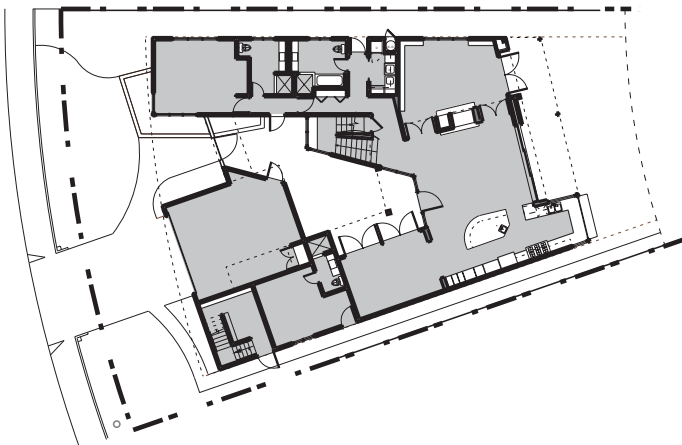
**OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** Sand-colored Shellstone tiles were used for the living room, which opens to the courtyard on one end and the beach on the other. Dining room (rear) is a virtual gallery showcasing San Diego artists' work. Painting on the closest wall is by Donald Borthwick; concrete-and-glass table is by Michael Shane.



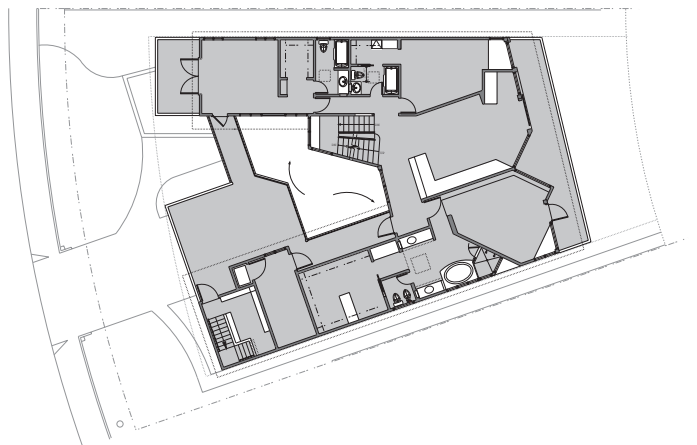
**THIS PAGE TOP:** Couch, chair and coffee table were designed by interior designer Megan Bryan. At left is Knoll's new version of its classic Risom chair. Rugs from Outrageous Rugs. **THIS PAGE BOTTOM:** Recycled-glass backsplash in the stainless-steel kitchen is from Oceanside Glasstile Co. Dacor range and hood. Window opens from the bottom.



**ABOVE:** The office, set up for six work stations, opens to a second-floor terrace. Bowls on the custom curly maple bookcase in foreground are by Leonel Quezada (left) and Juan Quezada. Paintings in foreground are by Franz Mark. Large painting in background is by W. Haase Wojtyla. **OPPOSITE ABOVE:** Homeowner Michael Thiemann found the wine-tasting room's 18th-century French provincial carved walnut sideboard at a Seattle auction. Flooring is 100-year-old Douglas fir planks. Racks by Vintage Cellars of San Marcos. **OPPOSITE BELOW:** A painting by Douglas Knutson and a sculpture by Joe Nyiri frame the green-limestone fireplace. Music room is in background. Piano is a 1900 vintage Mason & Hamlin AA piano. Zebra wood cabinets are from European Casework, shutters from Jim French Custom Shutters.



LOWER FLOOR



UPPER FLOOR



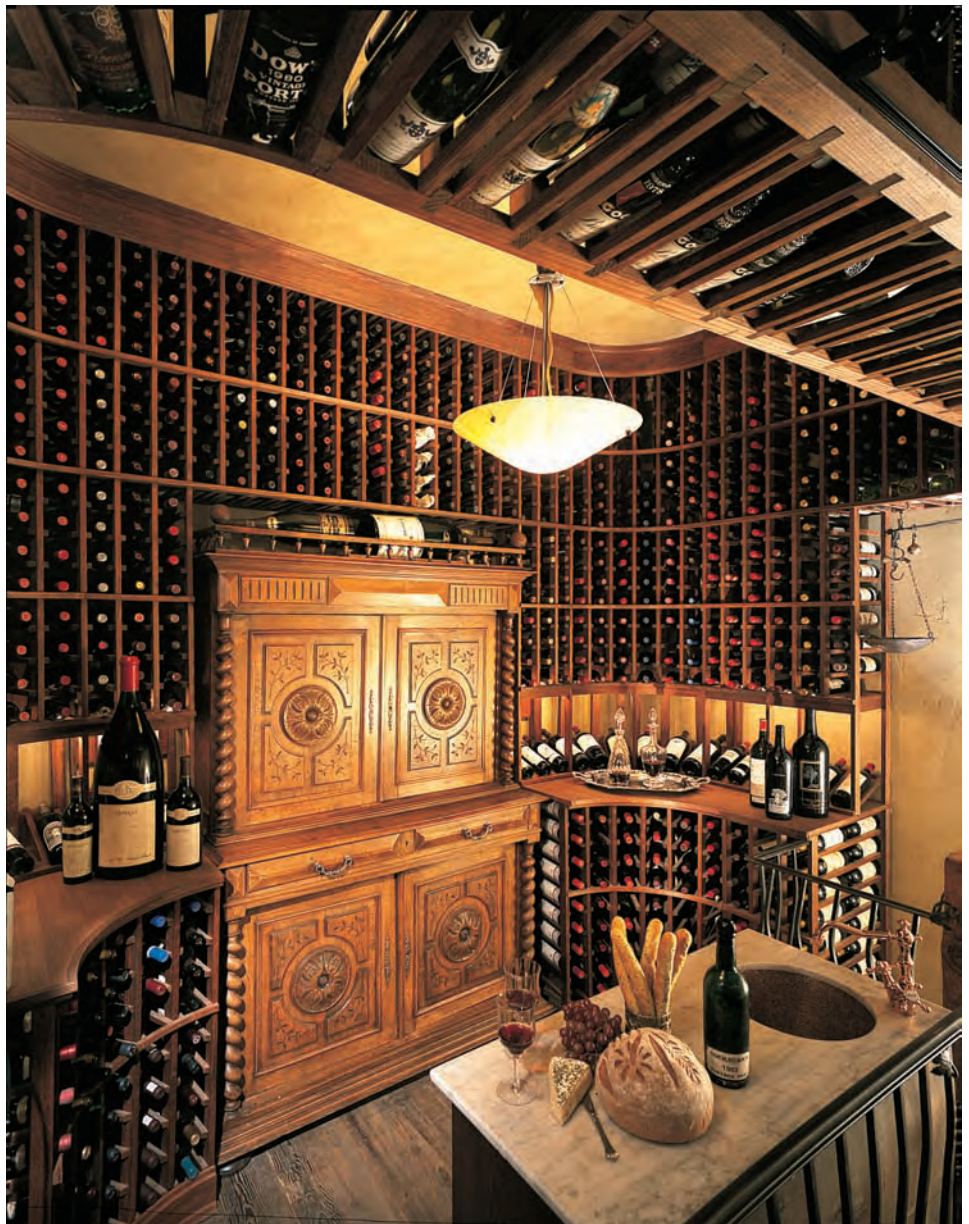
winners, builder Terry Wardell and Peeling's wife, interior designer Megan Bryan, came aboard. Together, this dream team created a dramatic but no-nonsense beach-combing beauty of a home.

The project was an exciting interplay between homeowner and architect, Peeling said, The Thiemanns are very hands-on clients. We were able to work in quite a few of my ideas as well as theirs.

Peeling and the Thiemanns designed the basic floor plan, which placed human-scaled spaces over four levels of living area.

Bryan, co-owner of Divan + Studio in La Jolla, chose finish materials and furnishings, and also offered the inspired suggestion to flip-flop the dining room and kitchen to give the cook's space a primo window-to-the-water space.

Wardell, owner of Wardell Builders of Solana Beach, infused the project with his wealth of expertise and ideas. One of his contributions was showing how the 14-foot-wide living-room wall could be opened up to the beach.



liked. Members of the design team were talented and well organized. The crews were proud of the work they were doing, and the quality each crew brought was built upon by the next. No one wanted to have work that stood out poorly against the work that went before.

The design team decided to keep the old house's central courtyard but enhanced the space with architectural elements and a spectacular mix of sturdy, easy-maintenance materials, including copper, slate, quartzite and stainless steel. Catherine Thiemann's slate fountain design not only adds beauty but also muffles the noise from busy Pacific Beach Drive.

Inside the house, the handsome but sensible choice of materials in the courtyard continues with sand-colored Shellstone tiles on the first floor and Brazilian cherry hardwood, slate walls, limestone counters and stainless-steel railings on the second.

Rooms live larger than their dimensions because of the home's open floor plan and easy indoor-outdoor flow. Glass doors from the living and dining rooms open to the courtyard. Custom doors that disappear into the walls open up the living room to the beach. Glass doors from the music room/library swing open to the patio.

In the kitchen, a spectacular top-hinged 7-by-5-foot awning window opens to reveal a granite countertop that runs seamlessly inside to out.

I got the idea for the window from a mini-van's pop-out window, Michael said.

RoboDesign International of Carlsbad fabricated the window and Wardell's crew installed it. The window's resistance was benchmarked to the comfort level of petite Catherine, who can open or close it with a gentle nudge.

Dinner guests may think they're ensconced in granite, but the stone-like material on two walls of the dining room really is a handmade paper. The other wall

is a bank of French doors that open to the courtyard. The dining table is a concrete-and-glass work of art by San Diego artist Michael Shane, and a stunning gallery of paintings by San Diego artists is displayed on the walls.

We collect the works of San Diego artists through the San Diego Public Library's visual-arts program, Catherine said.

The Thiemanns frequent the nearby Manuel Oncina-designed Earl & Birdie Taylor Pacific Beach branch, where monthly shows are mounted by the library system's visual-arts curator, realist painter Mark-Elliott Lugo. Lugo helped the Thiemanns display works by, among others, Douglas Knutson, Dottie Korn-Davis, Donald Borthwick, John Brodie, Merryl Berner Cicourel, Joe Nyiri, Richard Allen Morris and W. Haase Wojtyla.

The Thiemanns' collection of San Diegans' works does not stop on the first floor. A high-tech home office and the master suite also are enhanced by artworks.

The office is set up so mom and dad can work and play beside their children, Claire, 12, Henry, 8, and Paul, 2.

We want to see them while they're on the computer, Catherine said.

The office and master bedroom open to a generous balcony overlooking the beach. The Thiemanns can send the green-limestone fireplace and window blinds on- or off-duty by depressing a button in a keypad built into the nightstand. A Rajah slate wall with a pair of square windows separates bedroom from bath, where more artworks are displayed.

A bridge overlooking the courtyard leads to the children's second-story wing. The boys share one bedroom and sister Claire has one to herself. Each bedroom has its own bathroom.

Also on this level is a sophisticated wine-tasting room, with an 18th-century French provincial carved walnut sideboard

that Michael bought at auction in Seattle. Hundred-year-old Douglas fir planks form the floor. Stairs descend to a first-floor racking area that helps store the cellar's 5,000 bottles.

Atop the second floor is a walled roof deck where the Thiemanns dine almost every day – even in winter. A mahogany counter inset with vintage photos of Pacific Beach wraps around a corner quartzite fireplace. Guests can pull up one of the galvanized-steel stools to the counter and eat, drink and enjoy the blue sweep of sea and sky.

A nearby scene is equally enthralling – a rooftop sculpture garden highlighted by a Joe Nyiri sculpture.

The stone-floored deck has all the amenities, including its own kitchen, with a sink, fridge-icemaker, cooktop, oven, dishwasher and microwave. There's even a crane to hoist party equipment when the family entertains.

Overlooking the outdoor living space is a deck for the hot tub and – a little higher – a viewing platform where the story of this house began. It's the highest of the residence's four levels.

One early fall afternoon a dozen builders (in San Diego for a conference) braved the climb up the ladder built into the copper tower wall. Until they reached this view deck, they were mostly interested in the price of building materials and construction tricks and how the house's builder and owners dealt with codes and restrictions.

But up here, their thoughts soared with the V-formation of migrating high flyers passing overhead. To the horizon the teal mirror of water ballasted the light azure ceiling of sky as the movement of boats with ballooning sails slowly changed the scene's composition.

Upon reflection, there was nothing wrong with this view. Nothing at all.■

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