

# SAN DIEGO HOME/GARDEN

LIFESTYLES

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Contemporary charm on a La Jolla bluff



30<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
SILVER FORK AWARDS

HOMES

## a HOME WITHIN a HOME

An architect's remarkable seaside estate plays big or small, depending on the family's whims

BY THOMAS SHESS • PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARY PAYNE

**P**RESENTED WITH A WORLD-CLASS site along California's Gold Coast, a fledgling architect might be tempted to go Gehryish, and design a residential tourist attraction instead of a home.

Those who are wiser, like Jon Dominy of Domus Studio Architects, understand the most beautiful locations deserve timeless architecture—a creation that embraces nature and has a sense of belonging.

Dominy's elegant contemporary seaside project (exclusively previewed by *San Diego Home/Garden Lifestyles*) joins an impressive San Diego roster of the decade's most significant remodels. Honoring the clients' vision and simultaneously creating a beautiful seaside work of art is what Dominy accomplished.

Dominy's mission was to guide the family daily through a truly amazing site and create a heightened sense of awareness of the ocean, coastline and weather.

The entry is about decompression. You descend from the street onto a driveway through an oak grove to the motor court, and are guided to the front door by the elevated, linear water feature.

Walking through the front door you first are treated to an unobstructed view of the Pacific, which draws you along the stone walls to the light and living room beyond. The walk is rewarded once you reach the cantilevered end of the living space and see the coastline perspective below, with views from Dana Point to La Jolla Cove.

The homeowners asked Dominy to surround them with all the "Just Do It" stuff: a playground with swings, a full-sized basketball court, a large infinity pool and a separate "fun" house where a previous bowling alley has been tricked and slicked to perfection. "But, take away the recreation elements and there's a comfortably sized home," says Dominy, who is a member of the architecture firm founded by his father, Lou. "The house is really designed around my clients' lifestyle, family, friends and entertaining in the San Diego climate."

While it is an estate, and the two-level contemporary can be shown off on special occasions (like charity concerts), perhaps more importantly, it is a home. Its success also is gauged by how it excels on a daily basis for a busy family—a family that has his-and-her home offices and even home offices for the kids.

The finished seaside compound recalls the architectural spirit of the late Rudolf Schindler, whose iconic home designs in mass forms—concrete, stone and wood—remain inspiring to this day. Like Schindler, Dominy compartmentalized the living

spaces to focus on the family's lifestyle. This is a big, two-story residence, but Dominy created a home within a home, making 20,000 square feet feel intimate. (Schindler's Pueblo Ribera Courts in La Jolla is a classic example of this telescoping effect.)

Less is definitely more with this La Jolla home. The exterior is inspiring because it isn't overwrought with visual gimmicks that are more marketing than architecture. Clad with relatively inexpensive sandstone quarried in India (locally known as Padre Gold because it was used to give Petco Park its distinctive sandy look), the home blends with nearby ancient sandstone cliffs. That's the look Dominy wanted because, as he says, "It gives off a sense of stability and permanence to a site that sits precariously on the edge of the continent."

The woman of the house says, "At the beginning, I wanted a warm Midwestern home that was more traditional," but she was soon won over to a more conservative, contemporary look when she realized that a streamlined home would work better for her athletic husband and children. After all, she says, it would have been difficult for a full-sized basketball court to meld into a heartland 19th-century look.

No, we're not in Kansas—or even Kensington. One glance through the sea of glass windows confirms that. But what's even better than windows to capture one of California's finest views? How about no windows at all?

"Four panels from the southwest corner of the kitchen sitting area fully retract in both directions, to the east and north. This opens up a section of wall 10 feet tall by 44 feet wide," says Dominy.

Just like the kitchen, the delightful southwest corner sitting room also is surrounded by movable glass. "Those windows don't look like they open, but they do," he says.

This view-oriented sitting room, the kitchen and the living room dominate the west end. Bedrooms, offices and family areas are on the top level. On the street (east) side there is a large family entertainment area. Guests coming over to catch a Chargers game can use a separate entrance to the game, bar and media areas without disturbing the rest of the family.

Like a paradox, the house doesn't look big, but it is. It's too sleek to be homey, but it is warm and inviting. It's modern, but it's timeless. With this project Dominy solidifies his place among the leading lights of contemporary residential architecture in San Diego. ♦

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The motor court is a quiet space, where the entry walk is drawn out to build anticipation.



Above: Sand area for children's swing set and volleyball court is near a recreation building.

Opposite: Outdoor pool deck offers a view of the infinity pool that also flows by stone-clad pillars into the interior pool area.



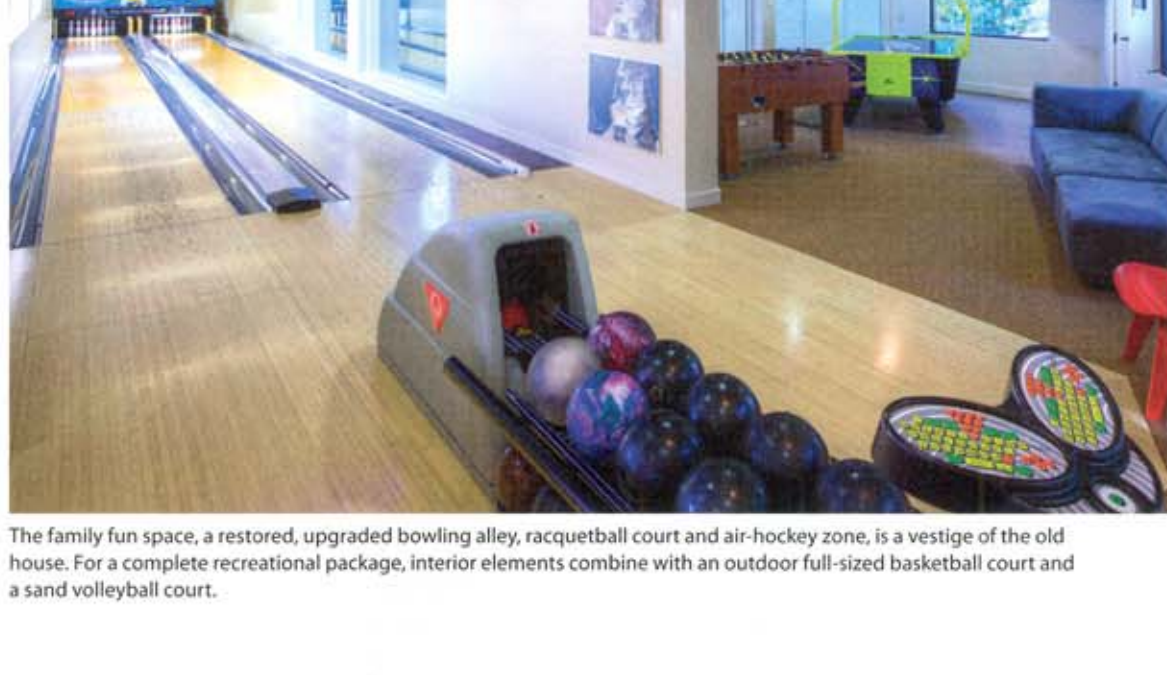
Opposite: Southwest view shows the infinity pool and spa edging the outdoor deck area. A large flat-screen TV, lowers from the bottom of the far-left stone lintel for added entertainment.



With the ocean in the distance, Dominy envisioned this sitting room at the southwest corner of the main house as an inside-out aquarium. The space becomes a terrace floating over the Andrew Spurlock-designed landscaping.



Two glass walls of the kitchen and breakfast area retract providing one continuous space with the pool, outdoor room and terrace. Jeannette Hoelcher designed the kitchen.



The family fun space, a restored, upgraded bowling alley, racquetball court and air-hockey zone, is a vestige of the old house. For a complete recreational package, interior elements combine with an outdoor full-sized basketball court and a sand volleyball court.



The retractable walnut wall (background) that divides the sports bar from the media center allows the owners to cater to multiple group sizes. The adults can be in the bar space while kids are watching a movie or it can be all one space for a Super Bowl party.