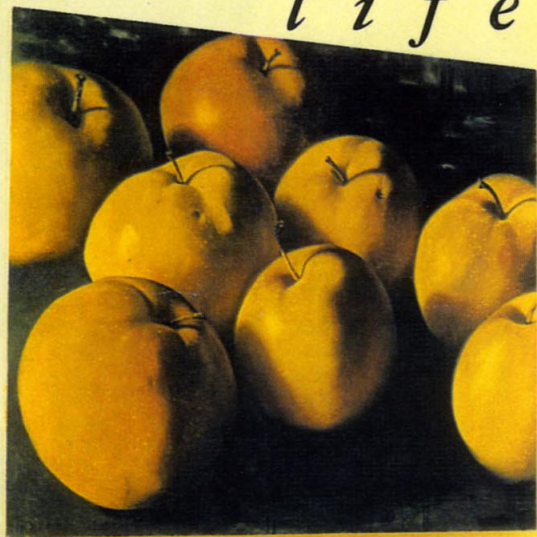


HARD SURFACES • POWAY DREAM KITCHEN

SAN DIEGO HOME/GARDEN

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ART & CRAFT

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Once a rabbit warren of rooms, downstairs area is now open, defined by levels and lighting. Stepped soffit creates a theme for interior details and furniture. Coffee table by architect/furniture designer John Nalevanko matches dining table and chair at right. Wood is ash, rubbed briefly with a white, oil-base enamel. Glass top weighs over 300 pounds. Hardwood dowels, encased in chrome-over-copper sleeves, connect legs. Chair built by Gus Larson. Credit also to Joe Nalevanko, John's father and mentor

ZIGGISM AND SUCH

A SAN DIEGO DESIGN TEAM'S APPROACH TO REMODELING

With the same effect as stepping out of a dense forest into the open sunshine, husband-and-wife team Michael and Denny Witkin, AIA, of Witkin Design transformed this home in Del Mar from a woody, compartmentalized maze of rooms into a space filled with the colors of the sunset and the essence of the Mediterranean.

Without structurally changing the exterior, except to add a deck, they remodeled this four-level, contemporary home to create a flow of space defined by lighting instead of walls.

BY LINDA HOVLAND
 PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALAN DECKER
 PHOTOS STYLED BY PAMELA SMITH





(Left) An arch of hanging shelves separates the dining room from sunlit breakfast nook beneath a pop-out greenhouse. Spiral staircase saves space and adds a dramatic, circular shape to the room's otherwise zigzag patterns. (Right) Kitchen orients to the west, with sink and stove work areas at one end to catch the view. Note narrow wine slot, curved shelves (to prevent bruises in a high-traffic area), and small blind at far left to hide counter when necessary



Before shots tell the dismal tale: gloomy interiors, seemingly acres of linoleum tile and shaggy carpet, and a stairway that consumed a good deal of floor space

Once called the pumpkin house because it was painted orange, the home today is stained six different shades of pale gray, each variation so subtle that the differences, like scattered, cloudy wisps in bright sunlight, are almost unnoticeable.

Inside is a room of soft pinks and blues that reflect the surrounding sea and sun. A walkway of white tile leads to a built-in wall unit punctuated with a smooth, glass vase and delicate ceramics. Across glossy oak floors, a white fireplace is trimmed with cobalt blue tile. Windows overlook the ocean. You almost get the feeling of being on a cloud until Oscar the par-



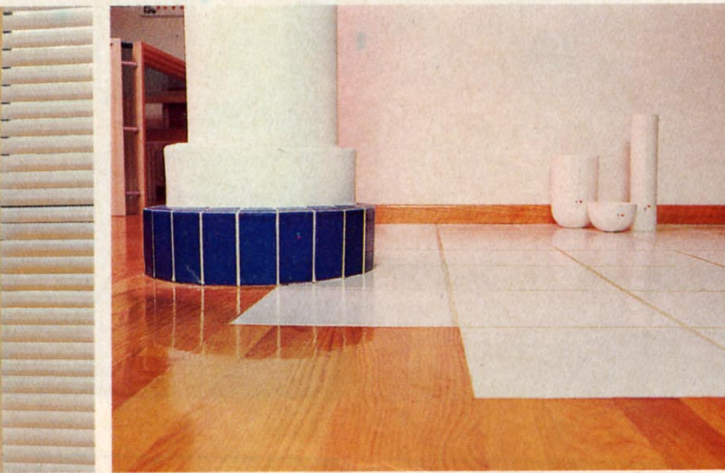
rot, perched in a corner, crackles "Hello!" and snaps you back to solid ground.

Owners Deborah and Simon, a career couple—he a physician, she in publishing—consulted with Witkin Design before purchasing the house. Deborah recalls, "The traffic patterns were very poor and the kitchen was small and dark. An open stairway that dominated one room was our albatross. Still, we all agreed that the house had potential."

The remodeling, which someday will extend to the upper floors, was concentrated on the main level. Walls were removed, kitchen space was doubled, the open staircase was replaced by a space-saving spiral, and a skylight and greenhouse were added to brighten a north-facing room. An outside patio was originally intended



(Left) 8-inch Serie Elementare tile from International Bath & Tile adds just a touch of color to the white kitchen. (Below left) Cobalt-blue tile accents zigs and zags beneath a lamp with a rather spare lampshade. (Below right) Large, Italian floor tiles are slightly textured for traction, butt to wood floor, wall, and pillar with perfection



The owners, he a physician, she an editor, enjoy a new deck off the greenhouse room

to be enclosed as an atrium. Instead, to keep within budget, it was tiled and made into a private garden courtyard opening out from the living and dining rooms.

The Witkins, who doubled as architects and contractors for the remodeling, comment, "As architects we paid close attention to our clients' life style and needs. As contractors we were able to follow through with the design. The result is a house molded around Deborah and Simon as though it were built for them."

Denny, who spent a major portion of her time on the site, explains, "I



was here every day scheduling and supervising and in this way was able to maintain control over each detail, including the budget. Even with limited exterior structural changes, the project involved twelve to fifteen subcontractors. Construction is a seemingly never-ending process. Still, we finished on time and within the construction budget."

To create the flow of open space, the Witkins combined living room and den into one area divided by levels (the living room is a few steps down from the adjoining den) and by lighting. Recessed and track lighting operate on independent switches and can separate or combine the two areas as desired.

Further defining the space is a stepped soffit which surrounds the living room. Michael refers to the soffit's layered effect as "ziggism," and living room and dining room tables and chairs reiterate that feature. They were custom designed and constructed by architect John Nalevanko and his father, Joe, a master cabinetmaker. A visually stunning white pillar trimmed in more blue tile was constructed to disguise a supporting post exposed when one wall was removed.

The kitchen is sparkling, crisp blue and white with red accents and has controlled, easily maintained surfaces. Designed by the Witkins and built by Hal Arnold and Associates, its efficient, European-style cabinetry keeps supplies and appliances accessible, but out of sight.

At one end of the kitchen, a greenhouse window encompasses a breakfast nook facing the newly added deck. Opposite the breakfast area, a skylight defines the new dining room. Originally, an open staircase filled this area, making it awkward and poorly used. Removing the old staircase and replacing it with the spiral one was an inspiration that saved space, added interest to the room, and separated the two eating areas, leaving them open, yet independent.

The intent for the outside of the house was to minimize the imposing height of four levels. Colorist Kathy McCormick was consulted to help determine an appropriate exterior finish. The result is six shades of gray—from rosy beige to green-blue—accented with white doors and white trim. The custom colors were made with an oil-based, solid-body stain to penetrate the wood's rough texture. The solid-body stain is estimated to have twice the life of paint and three times that of a semitransparent stain.

Like many other remodeling veterans, Deborah and Simon have memories of living through the stressful, four-month construction phase, and especially of being without a kitchen. He recalls the frustration with seemingly minute progress made some



An entry walkway leads beside living room and straight toward this dramatic display-shelf unit. Pillar is a supporting post. Stepped soffit holds recessed lighting

days; she was dazed by the endless procedures and people entailed in tearing things down and rebuilding them. Their suggestions to remodeling recruits: if possible, move out while the work is being done, and educate yourself on construction pro-

cedures so you'll be somewhat prepared for what's going to happen.

Today the construction dust has been cleared away, and all is in order. The house, towering on a hillside, is surrounded by sea, sun, and sky. It's cloud colored with a cloud's-eye view. Oscar is content to chatter away in his corner. Deborah and Simon have time to enjoy their new house and to contemplate the next step—remodeling the second level. ■