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SECOND STORY

In Orange County, a seemingly single-level beach house comes with a twist—a basement that's the heart of the home.

By Nora Burba Trulsson
Photography by Karyn Millet









In Corona del Mar, California, the newly built, gracious home has all the attributes one would want for a house just steps from the beach—a modernist design, an open, breezy floor plan and a wall of windows that slide away to link indoors with the pool patio and killer views of the Pacific. But this abode has a feature that few others in the area have. There’s a basement. Not just a basement, really, but a light-filled social space that serves as the heart of the home.

With builder Winke Custom Homes, architecture by Geoff Sumich and interiors handled by Michael Fullen and Omar Enany, the 7,800-square-foot, five-bedroom house is an entertainer’s dream with plenty of indoor/outdoor space to accommodate parties. The impetus for the design, though, came about through local zoning restrictions.

“The client said, ‘build me a home with a basement that doesn’t look and feel like a basement,’” Sumich, principal of San Juan Capistrano-based Geoff Sumich Design recalls. “He wanted a two-level house, but because of local height restrictions, we couldn’t build up, so we dug down.”

The lot, where an older house had been torn down, was between the neighborhood’s terraced streets that ease down a hillside towards the ocean. Sumich placed the home’s main level and front entrance on the upper street and used the lower street to create a garage entrance and to dig down into the hillside to create the bottom level. In plan, the main level includes the open kitchen, dining and great room, master suite and two bedrooms. A casita just off the front door serves as a home office. The lower level includes another living room, game area, bar and bedroom that doubles as an exercise room.

“I like to use simple materials and forms to make a bold statement,” Sumich says of the home’s low-slung design and repeated use of rough-tumbled Texas limestone, square breeze blocks and glass walls. His boldest statement for the house, however, is the lower-level courtyard and light well, which bring in light from above to the entertaining space below.

Two of the walls are green walls—vertical gardens—dense with a variety of plants kept alive with a high-tech irrigation system. The courtyard itself, appointed with a water feature and fire pit, is accessed from the lower-level living room via frameless window walls that pocket to the side, while a sculptural, open-tread outdoor staircase leads up to the main level.

“These green walls are really works of art,” Sumich says. “They add so much to the house.”







Throughout the house, Fullen and Enany, principals of Fullen Enany Design Group in Laguna Beach, also created a work of art through their selection of colors, furnishings and finishes. “This neighborhood has a 1960s, 1970s vibe,” Fullen explains. “We wanted to honor that, but without doing a midcentury cliché.”

Another tried-and-true beach house theme the interior designers avoided was a “sandy” color palette, instead opting for pale backgrounds and deeper, golden hues in the furnishings. Pieces were chosen for classic lines and comfort, Fullen explains, and much of the upholstery was done with durable outdoor fabrics to withstand a beach-and-pool lifestyle, not to mention entertaining.

While the green walls are the exterior’s pièce de résistance, the lower level bar is the interior’s showstopper.

“The bar is influenced by a London nightclub or boutique hotel lobby bar,” Fullen says. “We played around with the concept and used Claro walnut for the bar, ceilings and walls, and LED lighting for accents. I also scattered several small tables and club chairs in the space to give people seating options in addition to the bar itself.”





Other details throughout the home draw the eye, such as an interior's spiral staircase that connects the two levels, illuminated by day with a large skylight and, at night, with a blown glass and metal chandelier. A hallway connecting the main level's living areas with bedrooms called for a bookcase, which Fullen turned into a work of art by designing book niches, turned 45 degrees, to create an articulated wall of literature.

Outside, the main-level's front facade is accented by fixed wood louvers that filter light and provide privacy for street-side bedroom windows, a breeze block wall and a sculpture of stainless steel rods that rises out of the ground, piercing a circular opening in the roof overhang.

Completed and now occupied by a young family, the home is an epicenter of casual living and entertaining, with the lower level being a magnet for family and friends. Nonetheless, the residence also exudes a sense of quiet serenity.

"I stopped by the house when it was finished," Sumich says, "and while I was by the green wall, a hummingbird appeared. I have to admit, it was magical." ❶



DYNAMIC
DES
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By Sam Micatrotto
Photography by Mark Sacro



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A good interior designer changes the way a space feels, but only the best designers can change how a space makes YOU feel. Check out who made our curated list for our picks of who's The Best of the Best.

When it comes to making a house a home, you look to someone who you can trust to bring your vision to life. That's where an ICONIC interior designer comes into play. With contagious energy and passion that translates directly into their work, a blank slate becomes a masterpiece. Check out the top designers who inspire us with the magic that they bring into homes across Orange County, reflecting not only their talent but their deep experience.

DYNAMIC DESIGNERS





MICHAEL FULLEN & OMAR ENANY

FULLEN ENANY DESIGN GROUP, INC

Founded in 2003 and most recently known as Michael Fullen Design Group, Inc. has now rebranded as Fullen Enany Design Group, inc, the latest iteration is the result of the collaboration of Michael Fullen and Omar Enany. Omar has been an integral part of the design team since 2015 and Michael Fullen started the firm in 2003.

Together with their team of design professionals have designed and collaborated

in the build of more than 100 homes along the coast of Southern California. In recent years the firm has spread its wings on many occasions and has now designed homes in New England, New York, Arizona, Washington, Idaho, Mexico and Kuwait as well as Southern California.

The duo will continue to follow the principles and practices that have made them a standout in the design industry, no matter how large they grow. At their inception, as a small company, they were able to adapt and meet the needs of every client, architect and builder on every project, and now, through all of their success and changes, they have vowed to keep these core values to best serve their clients.

The firm's fresh esthetic and exclusive designs have landed them features in Robb Report, HOOM, California Homes, Luxe in addition to other reputable publications. Their work appeals to luxury homeowners with an appreciation for the distinct designs and high-quality furnishings that the team is known for. The homeowner is the firm's top priority when creating an aesthetically pleasing space that caters to their lifestyle and needs, resulting in the home they've always dreamed of.

Fullen Enany Deesign Group, Inc. is dedicated to outstanding customer service and the relationships built with the homeowners, architects, builders and craftsmen on every project. Their unwavering commitment to every project is what makes them stand out in the industry.