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LIST**



# THE CLIFF-HANGER

FAMILY AND FRIENDS TEAM UP TO BUILD A DREAM HOME ON A STEEP  
SITE OVERLOOKING NEWPORT BAY AND THE PACIFIC BEYOND.

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INTERIOR DESIGN / COURTNEY LAWRENCE ZIETHING, C.C. AND COMPANY  
ARCHITECTURE / DAVID R. OLSON, DAVID R. OLSON ARCHITECTS  
HOME BUILDER / ROBERT D. MCCARTHY, RDM GENERAL CONTRACTORS







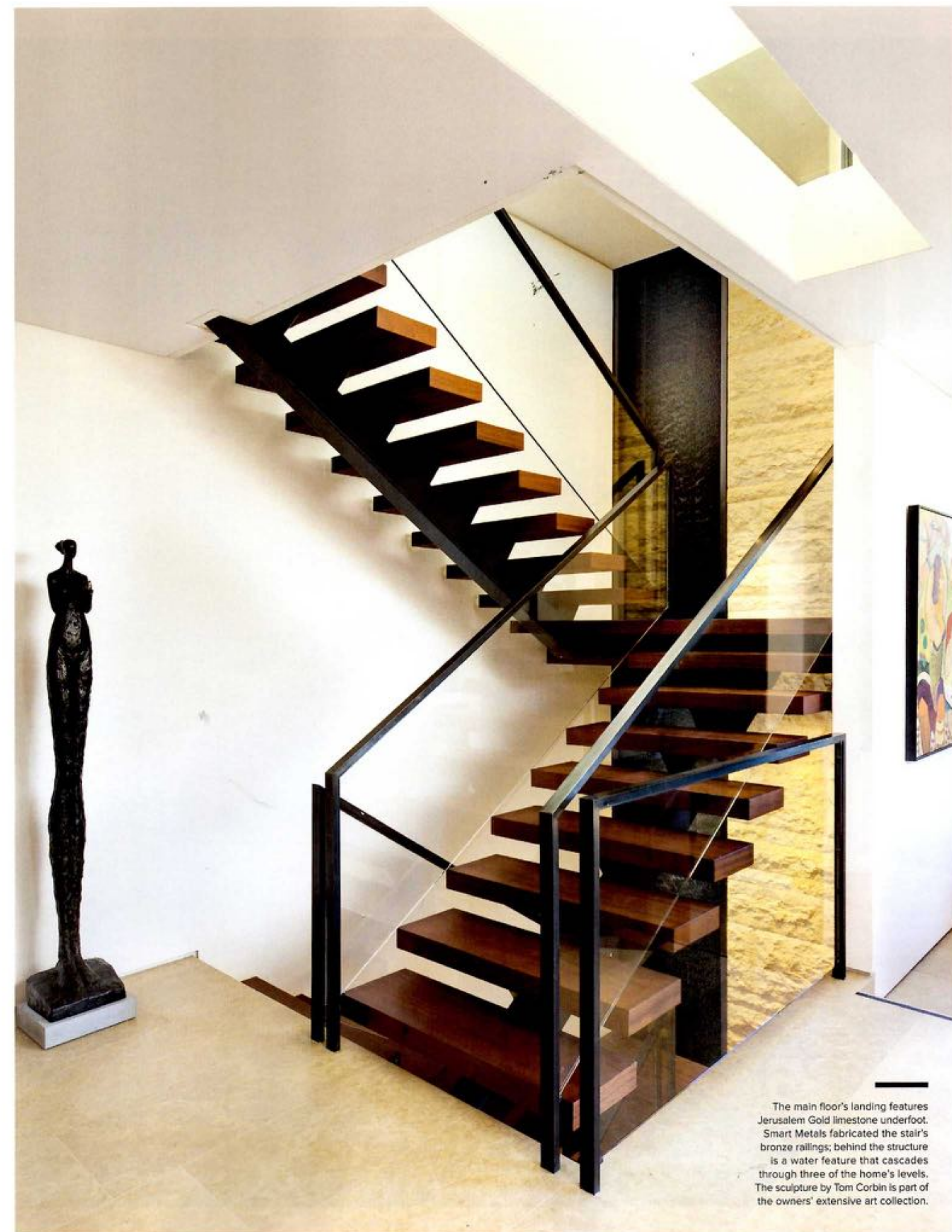
Few people thought it would be practical—or even possible—to build a house on a compact cliffside parcel at the end of a public park overlooking Newport Bay. Once their children were grown, though, Kim and Carolyn Megonigal decided to defy the odds, so they assembled a crew that included interior designer Courtney Lawrence Ziething, who happens to be Carolyn's sister, along with architect David R. Olson and builder Robert D. McCarthy, a friend of the couple's. "It was a lot of years in the making, but the result was worth it," says Ziething. "There aren't many houses in Corona del Mar that capture views of Newport Bay and the ocean at the same time." Adds Carolyn: "This was a family affair. It was a labor of love for all of us."

The steep cliff was not the only obstacle: To protect the surrounding views, the city wouldn't allow the construction of anything taller than a one-story structure on the site. In that regard, though, the location proved to be a boon for the team—they took advantage of the craggy cliffside

to create four levels with only a single story on the street. Olson ultimately went through multiple redesigns requiring meticulous three-dimensional models of the bluff to accommodate both the challenging locale and the city regulations. The architect likens the process to manipulating a Rubik's cube, "except, with this one, I had to deal with the insides as well as the outsides," he shares. "That's why the house has the shape and stepping pattern that it does; it gracefully cascades down the hill."

The construction of the artful, cantilevered residence took nearly three years, an undertaking overseen by McCarthy and project manager Chris Lindsay, and it required long steel beams to be drilled into the ground along the curb to prevent the steep slope from collapsing during the excavation. "There really wasn't a site there, just a cliff," McCarthy says. Given the tricky spot, "Every week, there was a new challenge," Lindsay recalls. Among them, equipment had to be lowered down to the building site with a crane, and the dirt hauled back up in buckets.

A solid mahogany door with glass panels, crafted by Ziething Cabinets, opens into a contemporary Corona del Mar home by architect David R. Olson. Builder Robert D. McCarthy oversaw the installation of the Jerusalem gold limestone from Epic Ceramic & Stone and stucco that define the façade. The copper standing-seam metal roof is by Atlas Sheet Metal.



The main floor's landing features Jerusalem Gold limestone underfoot. Smart Metals fabricated the stair's bronze railings; behind the structure is a water feature that cascades through three of the home's levels. The sculpture by Tom Corbin is part of the owners' extensive art collection.





Interior designer Courtney Lawrence Ziething chose plush Bergamo fabric from Donghia for the living room sectional and a Holly Hunt mohair for the lounge chair, which were both fabricated by Burger Quality Upholstery. Under the custom walnut-and-brass coffee table by Ziething Cabinets is a carpet from Tufenkian. Windows and doors by Fleetwood open to views of Newport Bay.

Now seamlessly integrated into its site, the dwelling's front door opens to the home's top level, which includes the garage and a foyer with an office area overlooking the views. A clerestory pulls the eye outward and upward to create an open, transparent feeling. "We had a limited footprint, so I wanted the eye to have options up, down and out," says Olson. To connect three of the home's levels, he conceived a sculptural steel-and-glass stairway with floating wood treads, and, alongside it, there is a hand-forged bronze water installation that trickles softly, running from the entry to the bottom landing, where a series of illuminated shelves highlights the owners' collection of art glass. "It was important to have a strong dramatic design element on the back side of the home, because everything else is directed toward the harbor," Olson says.

A sense of balance is apparent throughout the residence, implemented via the materials palette that echoes the structure's plaster, Jerusalem limestone walls and flooring, and copper detailing on the roofline. "It's a simple array of colors that really suited the exterior environment," says Ziething, who worked closely with Olson to select





the elements. Inside, Jerusalem limestone faces the great room's fireplace, softened by plush furnishings and a wool-and-silk rug. Similarly, in the kitchen, the smooth quartzite countertops create contrast with the rustic stone backsplash. "They are really beautiful, especially at night," says Ziething, who used limestone for the flooring in the guest bathroom but opted for onyx on the walls and countertops. Bespoke African mahogany cabinetry, which was built by Ziething's husband, Jim, adds another layer of texture and richness to the kitchen and conceals built-in refrigeration as well as doors to a powder room and pantry.

Ziething carried the mahogany into the master suite, using it for the integrated bed and side tables. Likewise,

the Jerusalem limestone makes an appearance in the master bathroom, where it appears on the walls in a rough-hewn form and on the pristine floor. (The sculptural soaking tub and shower bench are also limestone.) "It's very important to mix shine with matte and texture with smooth," explains Ziething. "There's a balance of materials that's pretty consistent."

The owners are overjoyed to finally live in the home they envisioned for so many years. "Every time we walk through the front door, we think about how grateful we are, and how much we love our home," Carolyn says. "There are no better sunsets than from our patio." Adds Kim: "We sit out there with a glass of wine and watch the boats go by. It's just magical." ■

Quartz from Epic Ceramic & Stone tops the kitchen counters, which feature an integrated sink with a Waterstone faucet. Custom cabinetry by Ziething Cabinets conceals doors to a pantry and a refrigerator. The counter chairs are from Holly Hunt; the range is Wolf.



For the dining area, Ziething Cabinets constructed the custom walnut table and buffet, accented by horn handles from Ochre, and a root base. Hovering above the table is a pendant from Plug, while arranged around it are Holly Hunt dining chairs. Artwork by Lorraine Pennington rests on the buffet.





The home's exterior is replete with thoughtful details. In one instance, a metal planter with a live wall of succulents serves as the backdrop to an outdoor shower, turning a utilitarian feature into a focal point. MDZA Landscape Architecture & Planning designed and installed the landscape.

An outdoor barbecue area and furnishings from Brown Jordan ensure the exterior living area is as comfortable as the interior spaces. Clad with handmade glass tiles, the custom spa with an infinity edge adds a sculptural element to the vignette.







Ziething carried the mahogany detailing into the master bedroom, where the wood covers the wall behind the custom platform bed and night table. Providing reading illumination is a Porta Romana light from Donghia. The sculpture is an 18<sup>th</sup>-century alabaster piece from Myanmar.

In the refined master bathroom, a monumental limestone tub from Famosa with Lacava fixtures and a frameless glass shower with a "floating" bench seem to disappear against the solid Jerusalem limestone wall and flooring from Epic Ceramic & Stone. The root planter is from Bo Tree Source.



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