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PALM BEACH CHIC

COASTAL LIVING

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BEACH HOMES
ACROSS THE GLOBE

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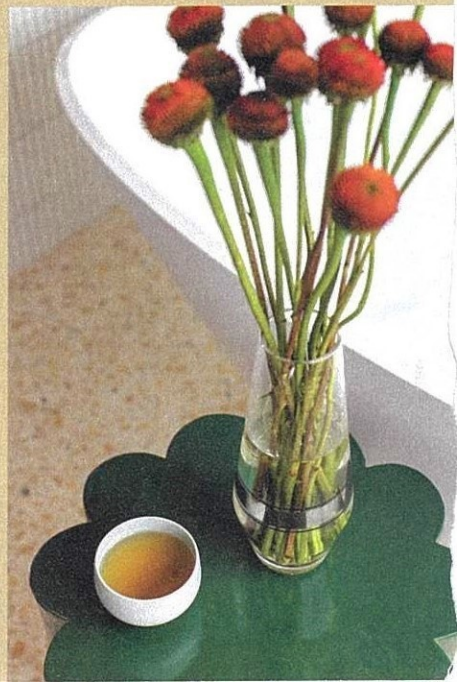
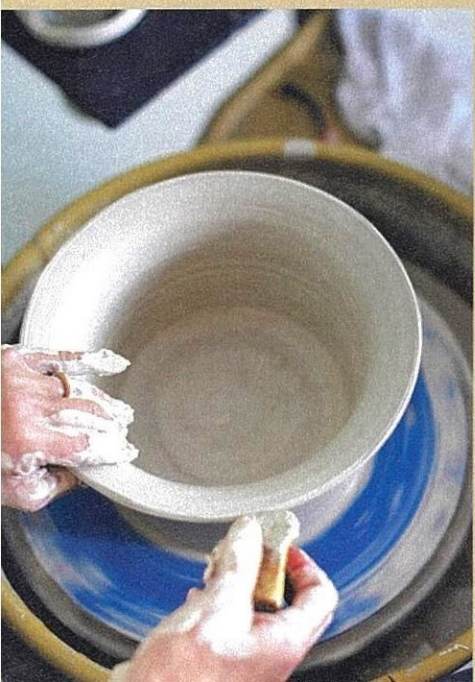
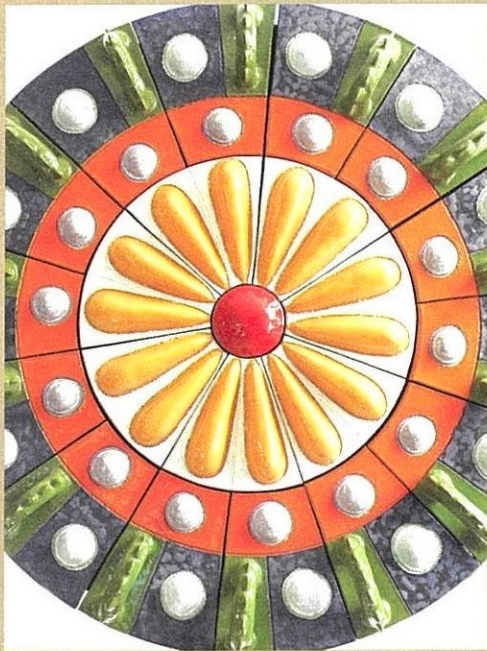
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BHG SPECIALS

FOREVER BLUE & WHITE
Our Favorite Color Combo



All Right Ingredients

By Paige Porter Fischer

Photographs by Karen Millet



One of the first purchases homeowner Mary McDonald made for the house was a medallion that she commissioned sculptor Stan Bitters to create for the front entrance. "I put it by the front door so that you could see it through the window," she says. "It's double-sided, so it can be enjoyed walking up to the house or from inside."

In the historic art colony of Laguna Beach, California, designer Raili Clasen brought a midcentury exuberance to a contemporary beach house's modern vibe. The result is a colorful free spirit worthy of its pedigree

R

Raili Clasen is a natural matchmaker. “I love unpredictable pairings,” says the Newport Beach–based designer. “So many people are terrified of mixing two different woods in the same space, but I love nothing more. It’s organic. It feels lived in and layered when it’s unexpected. To me, the element of surprise in a house is what makes it sing.”

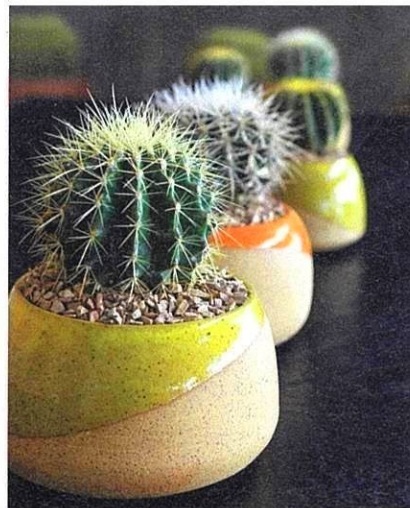
So, when Mary McDonald hired Clasen to design her family’s brand new, modern-eclectic house in Laguna Beach, California, the designer knew she would need to prove her theory that opposites do, in fact, attract. “The structure itself was very contemporary—think fixed steel beams, board-formed concrete walls, terrazzo floors, and metal windows,” she says. “But Mary is a potter, a talented artist with eclectic taste, a lively personality. [She] has a real sense of nostalgia for the 1970s. So I suggested we take all the warm elements of that era—the wood grains, the earthy tones, the playful patterns and textures—and have a little fun. Mary smiled and said, ‘Don’t hold back. Let’s do it. Nothing is too wild or crazy for me.’”

Clasen was inspired. She knew that the antidote to all the structure’s industrial elements would be adding plenty of hand-formed elements, from handmade tile to one-of-a-kind ceramic pieces—including ones from Mary’s own “Double M” collection, as well as works of art by noted sculptor Stan Bitters. She would soften the hard edges with organic shapes, a warm color palette, and nostalgic patterns. And, of course, she would bring in as much wood as possible.

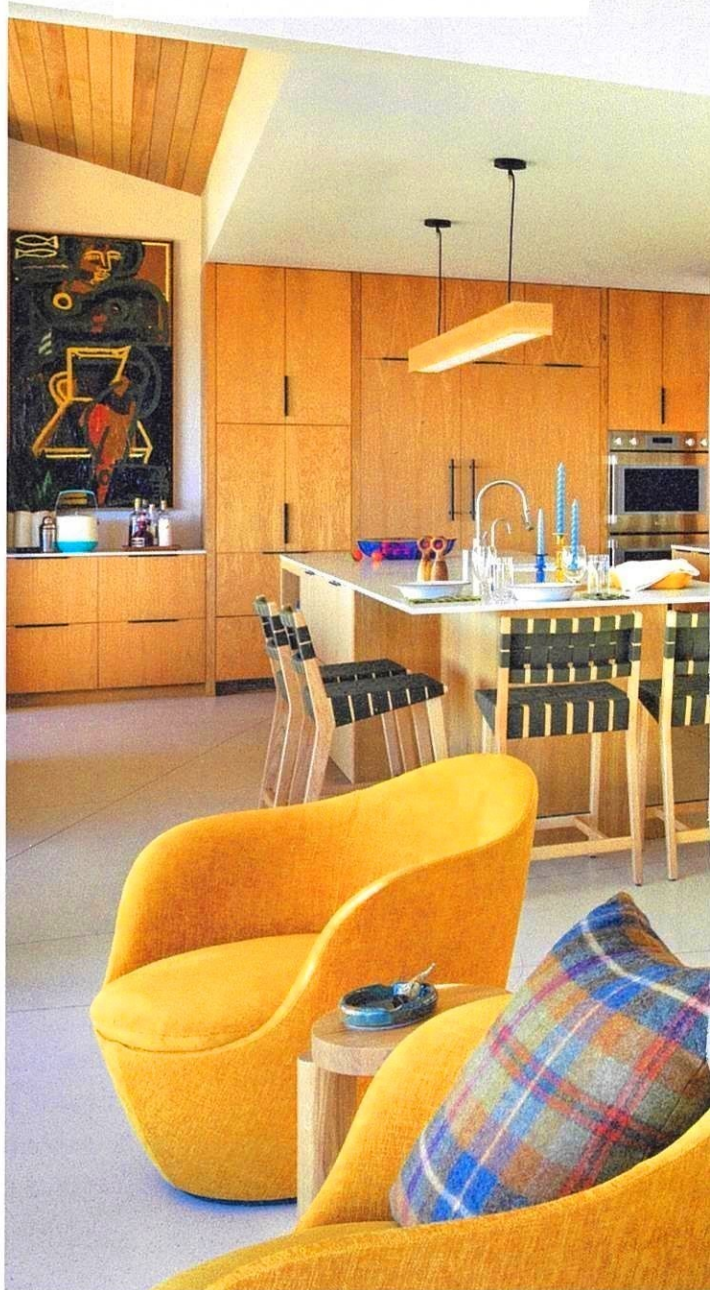
“Raili convinced me it was OK to mix wood tones,” says McDonald. “We have walnut, plain-sliced oak, cedar, birch, and even plywood; all that wood gives instant warmth to the house. We purposely chose ipe for the pool deck so that it would quickly give us that lived-in look. The term ‘midcentury modern’ was thrown around so much in the building process, which gave me pause, because I never wanted a house that felt like a cold waiting room of a psychiatrist’s office.”

Neither did Clasen, who outfitted the kitchen and the baths using handmade tiles with imperfections that deliver warmth and a welcome patina to the new house. She also sourced modern versions of 1970s plaids for key areas like the dining room and the primary bedroom, which added a lively note. She welcomed avocado greens, shades of yellow ochre, terra-cotta orange, and rich blues, all marrying beautifully with McDonald’s impressive art collection.

“There’s a tactile quality to this house,” says Clasen. “You want to run your finger across things—like the vintage 1970s coffee table, or the nubby fabrics, or Mary’s own pottery. Every little ingredient adds so much character. It may be a brand new house, but it feels older than its age—in all the good ways.”



Three ceramic thumb pots in terra-cotta by famed sculptor Stan Bitters hold cacti beneath the modern stairs, delivering a warm moment against the industrial backdrop of the steel stairwell.



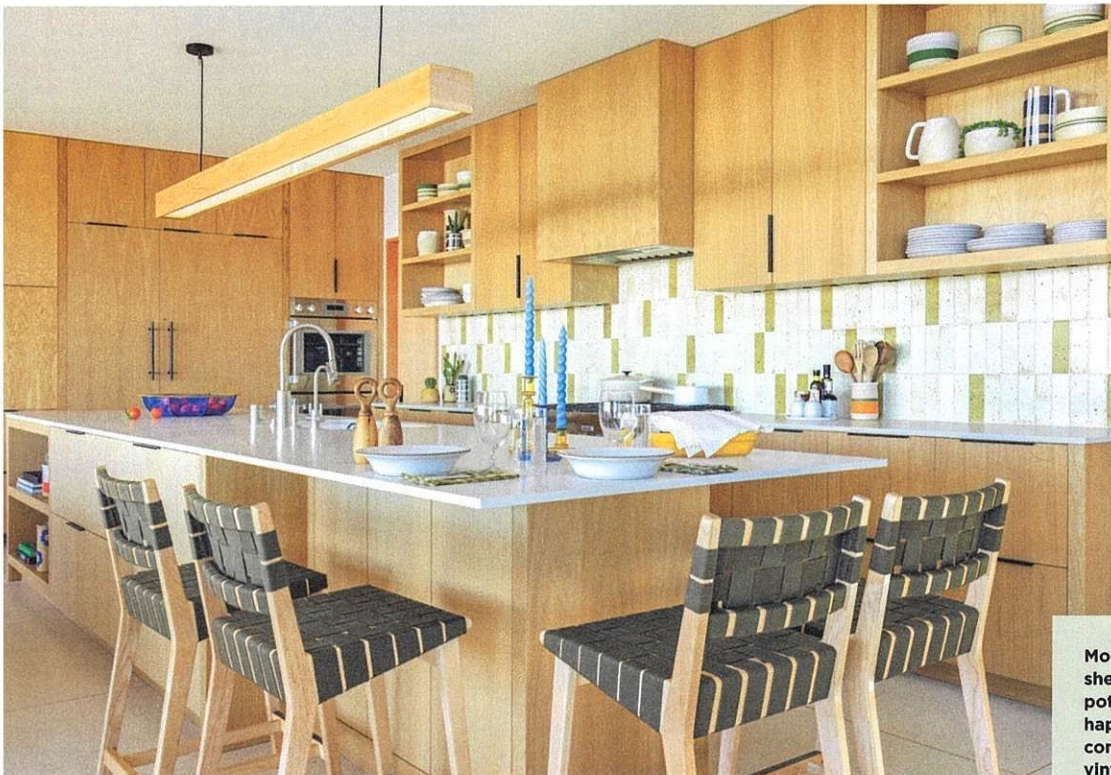
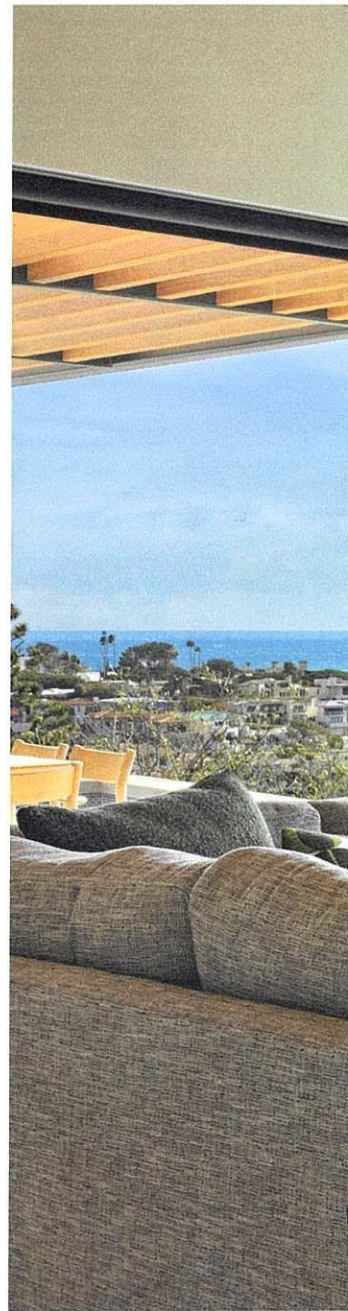
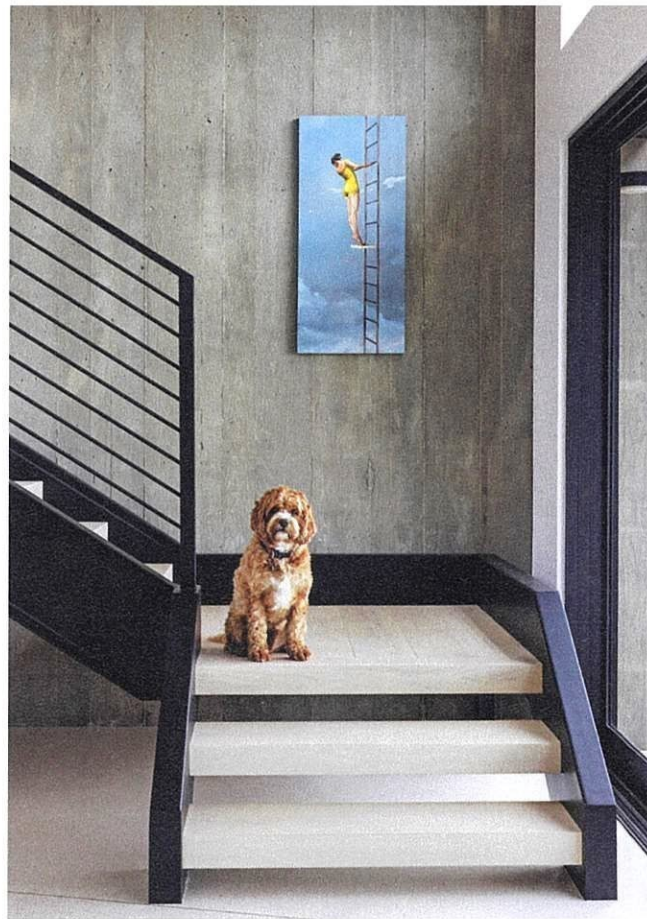
A fluted wall—a much more modern version of '70s wood paneling—creates a textural backdrop for the custom built-in bench, which Clasen dressed in a deep blue, ochre yellow, and avocado green plaid reminiscent of the era. When she couldn't find the perfect sconces for the space, she had three floor lamps cut to size. "We just chopped off the legs and hung them," the designer says. "Their cylindrical shades were so perfect for this room." A pair of sculptural yellow swivel chairs sits nearby. Their organic, soft lines soften the room's harder edges. "We sit

in these all the time, taking in the view," says McDonald. "They might be the most-used pieces of furniture in the house."

McDonald wanted the upstairs landing—and front entrance to the home—to double as a library, with shelving similar to the shelves she uses to display her pottery. "I think a beautiful bookcase can double as a work of art," she says. "Some people say they want a wall of bookshelves, but they don't have the books to fill them," says Clasen. "Mary, on the other hand, brought the books. And they were all beautiful books, too."



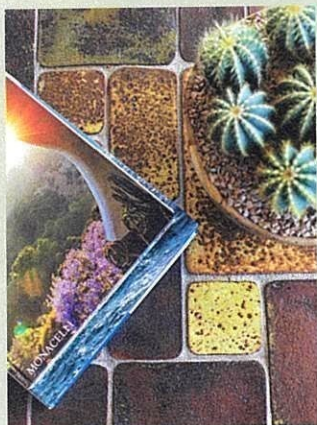
The homeowner's Cavapoo, Angus, welcomes guests. Board-formed concrete walls lend a wood-like texture, while terrazzo floors boast a subtle, warm aggregate. "We decided to use materials that would stand the test of time, hence the steel stairwell and concrete walls," says McDonald. "I love the idea of a bulletproof house, and terrazzo floors seemed perfect. They're used in airports around the world for that reason. We chose matte, so there is less sheen, but it has flecks of brown and tan in different shapes and sizes, which adds to that sense of imperfection that I wanted."



Modern, clean-lined open shelves feature handmade pottery, an example of the happy marriage of contemporary lines and vintage details in this house. The slight variation in tone and texture of each *clé* tile gives the backsplash a bit of old-world patina against the new cabinetry.

"I tend to start design work with the kitchen," says Clasen. "I decided, let's do a cool, calm kitchen and spice it up in the adjacent dining room." The designer chose rift white oak for the cabinetry—for the movement in its wood grain—and thin-profile Caesarstone countertops, which feels more modern. "I wasn't about to do a stone backsplash in here. We needed something with a handmade, imperfect quality to it, so we went with *clé*'s California collection of tiles. There's bubbling in them, and they're overbaked, so there are all kinds of imperfections that Mary loves." Olive green woven barstools by Knoll play to the home's '70s-style color palette.

"Cedar wood ceilings extend outside, beneath the eaves, and it really warms the cooler elements in the house" —Mary McDonald



Clasen's favorite piece in the house is the living room's vintage tile-topped table, which offers a texture that eliminates the need for coasters, says McDonald. "The tile top makes it bulletproof," she adds. "It's rare to find a vintage table like this that hasn't been chipped up, but this one was in perfect condition."

The living room's conversation piece is the view, so Clasen didn't want anything to compete with it. A sectional upholstered in a brown Kravet fabric envelops a vintage, tile-topped coffee table. "It's from the '70s, and I love its tiles," McDonald says. A brown-and-white striped rug anchors the airy space.

The home's vintage-inspired palette comes alive in the primary bedroom, where Clasen outfitted the Lawson-Fenning bed with another throwback plaid and a warm terra-cotta-colored coverlet. A dark blue rug grounds the lofty space, echoing the navy knotted piece by textile artist Windy Chien that hangs above the bed. McDonald found the maker of the nightstands—BCNW—on Instagram. "I normally like to touch and feel something before I buy it, but I took a chance on these, and the craftsmanship is outstanding."

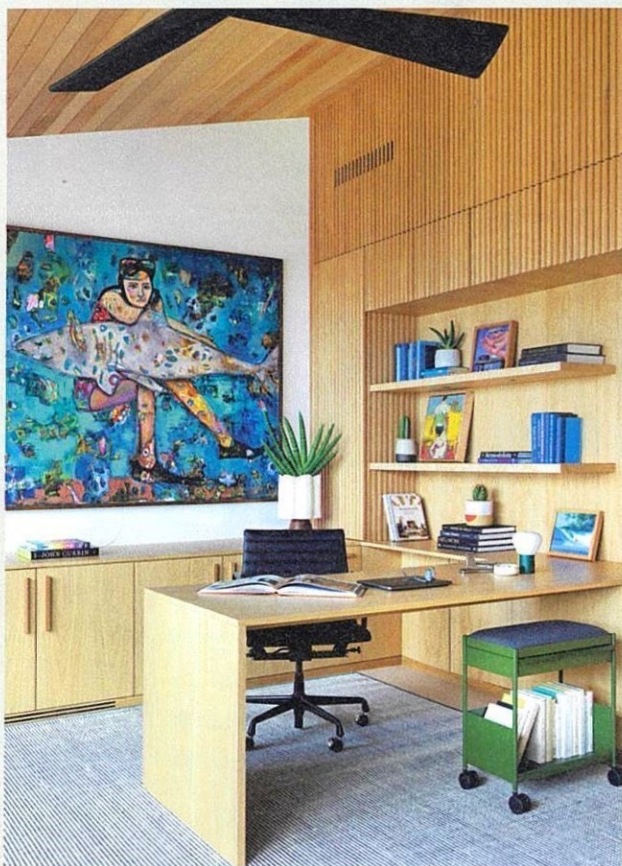




Clasen took the primary bath's narrow tiles all the way up to the ceiling, delivering plenty of texture to the space. "That little niche with the yellow tile and the light overhead is my favorite design moment in this space," she says. The green table by Bzippy adds a punch of color, while the tones of the terrazzo floor lend warmth. The seagull painting by James Strombotne is one of McDonald's most cherished pieces in the house.



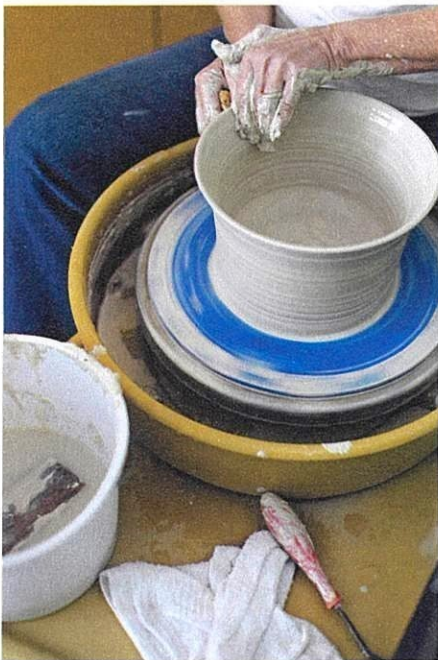
"This may be my favorite room in the house," says Clasen, who chose the polka-dot Tempest tile to "jazz up the white" and add a playful, artistic vibe to the bath. Inspired by the terra-cotta details in the light fixture, she chose the same hue for the tiles on the floor. "The wood grain on the vanity is beautiful and functions almost as another pattern in this light-filled space," she says. "I think it feels very fresh and very vintage all at once."



The home office boasts beautiful white oak built-ins and a large-scale painting by artist Tanya Talamante that McDonald found on a trip to Mexico. "When I come inside the house and look to the right, I see all the beautiful wood in the office, and that painting behind the desk, and it takes my breath away every time," says McDonald. "I feel like there are these beautiful artistic moments at every turn, and that's what I wanted all along."




Mary McDonald, homeowner and founder of Double M Pottery, enjoys throwing pots in her home studio, which boasts sage green tiles from Concrete Collaborative. “I chose the bright Formica cabinetry because the color is the vibe in most of my pottery,” she says. The epoxy floors are forgiving of any messes.



“We eat almost every meal outside,” says McDonald, who chose doors that open fully to make indoor-outdoor living a reality. She chose ipe wood for the patio around the pool, instead of concrete, because she wanted it to age quickly. “I really did aspire to a more lived-in look.”





"This house is a mixture of so many great ingredients. The exterior has stucco, wood, stone, steel, and copper on the roof. Somehow, it all works together quite nicely" —Mary McDonald