

MALIBU MAKEOVER

ARCHITECT DOUGLAS BURDGE AND DESIGNER MICHAEL LEE REWORK A NONDESCRIPT HOUSE OVERLOOKING THE PACIFIC, COMBINING A CASUAL **SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA** AESTHETIC WITH THE CLIENTS' COLLECTION OF EUROPEAN ANTIQUES

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANTHONY-MASTERSON / TEXT BY HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP





above: In a seating area of the kitchen an Italian mirror hangs above a white-denim-covered sofa, which is flanked by a black iron planter used as a table and an antique bistro table. **opposite:** "I raised door heights throughout the house to give the illusion of higher ceilings," says Burdge, "and added windows to bring in more light." In the guest room a Turkish rug lies between the bed and an oversize chair, both covered in antique linen sheets from Lee Stanton Antiques. A Turkish grain bag adorns the bed.

After years of fires, floods and landslides, Malibu—the epicenter of hip during the 1960s—had lost some of its allure. Southern Californians don't dwell on unpleasant history, however, so Malibu is back and today is also a bit more cosmopolitan. This is not, after all, the 1960s.

Faded country casual or sleek and minimal have tended to dominate Malibu design, but architect Douglas Burdge and designer Michael Lee had a different idea. As Malibu locals, they were receptive to their clients' desire to try something new. "They have tons of style and have been buying antiques for years," says Lee. By combining European antiques with contemporary art and the spare utility of a beach house, Burdge and Lee came up with a look that fit the aspirations of the clients, who call the style EuroCal.

Architecturally, they wanted to replicate the simplicity found in the Southwest and in the southern regions of France. With that in mind, Burdge completely remodeled the existing 6,680-square-foot house, which is set on a hillside and overlooks the Pacific Ocean. "It had bad finishes and tiles and no ocean views, so we had to rip it down to the studs," he says. "We tried to make all the rooms relate to the ocean views. We also created a courtyard with a fountain and a cylindrical stone tower for the entrance, so there's a more rustic feeling when you come into the house." Burdge removed any walls that obstructed ocean vistas, and he added open-air balconies to the upstairs rooms. Throughout the house, he raised the door heights to give the illusion of higher ceilings and added windows to bring in more light. Landscape designer Marny Randall of Santa Monica used Southern California stone to create steps and terraces that are filled with drought-tolerant Mediterranean plants and other ornamentals.

The owners wanted a house whose surfaces would be "honest, without frills." To accomplish that effect, the design team used finishes that resonate with authenticity. Burdge eliminated all soffits, replacing them mostly with antique Douglas fir beams from old barns. Weathered wood doors made of mesquite or pine were imported from Mexico; French doors of hand-distressed cedar were designed by Burdge. Lee chose unfinished quarter-sawn white oak in a muted taupe grey for the flooring, inviting a barefoot existence. Fittings for the French doors and exterior doors are from Rocky Mountain Hardware; interior door hardware was provided by The Golden Lion. "The clients gave me the freedom to find quirky light fixtures and other one-of-a-kind pieces," Lee notes. Per the owners'



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above: The master suite is furnished with a nineteenth-century French campaign chair and a Rose Tarlow table. A zinc-panel fire surround is inset in French limestone. **opposite, top:** Balconies were added to all of the second-level rooms, including the master suite. The owners selected an Uzbekistani *suzani* that they purchased in Turkey for their bed. **opposite, bottom:** A Kohler tub and limestone flooring were chosen for the master bath. A photograph of Brigitte Bardot and Picasso hangs above a Gustavian cabinet.

request, Lee was to create a discreet backdrop that would best showcase their collections of Biedermeier boxes and contemporary paintings and photographs. “I like simple surroundings, especially when people have such strong pieces and views of the ocean,” says Lee. “When you walk in, you see art and antiques and views.”

To reveal the seascape in the living room, the masonry fireplace was moved and embellished with a large molded plaster surround and a mantel that supports a gilt Italian candelabrum. A linen sofa and vintage leather chairs provide comfortable seating around a selection of nineteenth-century antiques such as a Gustavian iron side table on three cabriole legs and a Napoleonic campaign-style daybed. A large 1987 canvas, *Danae*, by Paul Manes anchors the room.

John Alexander’s *Lobster Still Life* dominates the dining room. Pale blue bistro chairs are gathered around a long table swathed in linen sheets, and a pair of eighteenth-century Portuguese candleholders offer elaborate contrast to French ceramic creamers. “They had a great collection of things, and I helped to edit it,” Lee says. “When you have a lot of good ideas, you need someone to say you might not need all of those ideas in one house.”

There are several seating areas in the kitchen. Three pairs of chairs with variously shaped backs stand around a contemporary country table. A corner banquette laden with pillows in Rogers & Goffigon and Rose Tarlow fabrics wraps around a circular metal table. An extension of the room presents a sofa and a chair with slipcovers of white denim, which act as casual counterpoints to an eighteenth-century Italian mirror.

Monastic in its simplicity, the master bedroom, which overlooks the Pacific, has a large open-air balcony furnished with a table and chairs. In the master bath, a photograph of Picasso and Brigitte Bardot hangs above a Gustavian cabinet. The generous bathtub looks like a piece of modern sculpture on the limestone floor. “We built mock-ups to get the shape right,” Burdge says. “The best decisions always come down to proportions and materials.

“The house had its restrictions,” he adds, “but we got rid of a lot of them. With the views, the authentic materials and the furnishings, it is just a very pleasing house to be in.” ➤