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WHAT'S HOT NOW!

SANDALS, SUNGLASSES & BLING FOR THE BEACH

'50s

ON THE HOUSE

STYLE post-and-beam
1950s construction that's
pure California

SPACE 1,425 square feet,
with three bedrooms, two
baths, and a large, open
living/dining/cooking area

VIEW sun-spangled water
swept by seagulls, dolphins,
sailboats, kayakers, and
the distant Catalina Islands





and fabulous!

A reverential designer shines up a 1950s Malibu beach house without losing any of its midcentury modern appeal



Throughout the house, Julie preserved Ellwood's original tongue-and-groove ceilings and "floating" wall detail, with its crisp recesses visible at the top and bottom.



On the Pacific side, a broad deck stretches over the sand. The exterior paint is a Benjamin Moore custom green. ■ A sofa and chairs slipcovered in washable denim and a vintage coffee table—all from Shabby Chic—maintain the living room's family-friendly feel. ■ Without changing its footprint, Julie gutted the kitchen and brought in sleek appliances and custom fiberboard cabinetry. ■ Spiky dracaenas flank the entry of the redwood-clad house.

In 1953,

a young journalist named Frank Pierson and his wife, Polly, paid \$3,500 for a sandy lot in Malibu, California. For another \$25,500, they hired the young but already high-profile architectural office of Craig Ellwood to build them a house on stilts above the waves. "It was one of the first

beach houses really open to the sea," recalls Frank, who eventually became rather famous himself as an Oscar-winning screenwriter. "You felt you were right there with the seabirds, right on the water."

But over the years, the house paid a toll for its seaside spot. After Frank moved on (to a bigger Ellwood-designed beach pad), the salt air continued to whip its wooden decks and corrode its metal window frames as the tide battered its pilings.

By 2004, when architectural designer Julie Hart first saw the place, another family, perhaps the fifth or sixth owners, had had it for 13 years. Julie's impression of the sleek wood-and-glass construction, perched above a beautiful Malibu beach, was one of affectionate appreciation. "It was very lived-in, worn around the edges but wonderfully open and comfortable," she says.

The owners, a couple with grown children and several grandchildren, had bought the house for weekend and summer gatherings. They hired Julie to renovate the kitchen and spruce up the interiors with fresh finishes and paint. But the next three years saw the project grow



DIARY OF A REMODEL what got replaced, rebuilt, and relocated

Architectural designer Julie Hart, based in Santa Monica, updated a midcentury marvel while preserving its originality. Here are some of the secrets to her success:

- She rebuilt the rickety redwood ramp on the front of the house and the decks with a more permanent material—Trex Brazilia, a rugged, wood-

polymer composite in a color similar to beach sand and the new white-oak floors inside. The side rails are fashioned of redwood posts and caps and marine stainless cable.

- She replaced weather-beaten Fleetwood sliding doors (“the Cadillac of sliders,” she says) with new, updated versions of the same brand.

- She relocated the fireplace, a welcome amenity on winter

nights, from its view-blocking position to a spot against the wall, creating space to give the owner what she had always wanted: a dining table with a built-in bench.

- Without adding to the kitchen, Julie designed it around the preferences of the owner, an informal cook who loves to set food out on the island and

let guests help themselves.

Replacing bulky old appliances, Julie brought in a sleek fridge, cooktop, dishwasher, and sink. She had custom cabinets built of paint-grade marine fiberboard and topped counters with Blizzard CaesarStone.

- In the two smaller bedrooms, Julie replaced louvered windows with less drafty, more secure fixed-awning ones.





Julie designed a space-saving bench to go with the Shabby Chic vintage dining table. She also added a light-refracting chandelier with crystal pendants—the Cellula, designed by Nunzia Carbone and Tiziano Vudafieri—and casual seating in the form of Emeco Navy aluminum chairs. The owner's collection of ceramic cups from Luna Garcia in Venice brighten the table. Oak flooring and soft blue paint warm up the quiet decor.

to include a new master bath and closet, an office alcove, and the makeover of a second bath, in addition to all-new floors, windows, and exterior decks. “In a house like this, where everything is interconnected, you see right away what needs work,” says Julie, who made the fixes without increasing the home’s 1,425 square feet (petite for Malibu) or altering the spirit of its original design.

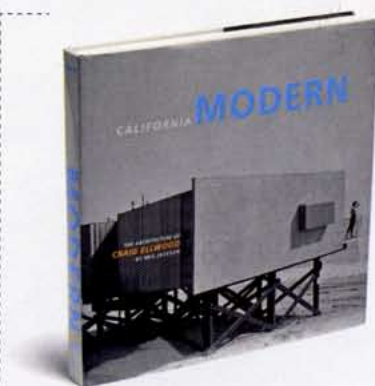
Still evident throughout are some of Ellwood’s signature details: Smooth white wall panels appear to float atop recessed shear walls, creating clean,

almost Japanese-style room divisions. Doors run from floor to ceiling, as do windows along the home’s beach-facing side. The volumes are simple and clean—the kitchen a compact cut-out from the living room, which is in turn an unassuming observation deck for the sea.

With time, though, some of the elements of Ellwood’s design were diffused: The house, which sits back from the street

behind a symmetrically placed pair of garages, was once only 1,200 square feet before an earlier family added two small bedrooms. Another owner replaced frosted glass panels flanking the front door with cheap louvers, and someone else painted red-and-black stripes around the kitchen. Before Julie arrived, the current owners had already done some work, including adding heat so they could use the house year-round and hiring Brendan McBreen of Shabby Chic to furnish its rooms in a breezy, beachy style.

Throughout the house, Julie kept everything she could—clear pine, tongue-and-groove ceilings, smooth-plastered



LOOK!
THIS HOUSE
MADE
THE COVER

CRAIG ELLWOOD'S RISE TO FAME

He was dashing, speeding to meetings in a red Ferrari (license plate: VROOM). He was married four times and had a gift for PR that made him a star on California's midcentury architectural scene. Yet Craig Ellwood, best known for his elegant wood- or steel-framed glass houses, wasn't an architect, nor was his name even Ellwood before he legally changed it. Born Jon Nelson Burke in Clarendon, Texas, in 1922, the young designer-to-be

came west on Route 66 with his family. Craig Ellwood, the name of his Los Angeles construction business, was partly swiped from a liquor store. In the late '40s, when he set up a practice designing houses, he and his company had the same name. Early on, his work was championed by *Arts & Architecture* editor John Entenza, who featured many Ellwood projects, including this one in May 1956, in the high-profile magazine. That's how Jerrold E. Lomax,

FAIA, learned of Ellwood, whom he joined as an associate from 1953 to 1962. Ellwood's flair for promotion helped him gain international recognition and take California architecture worldwide. "Our office produced some of the cleanest and best modern designs," says Jerrold, who worked on this house in the '50s. "Most of them still exist today."

This house is not just on our cover—it's also on the Ellwood book *California Modern* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2002), by Neil Jackson.



walls—and painted surfaces bright white to capture sunlight bouncing in off the water. Walls and ceilings are painted Pure Brilliant White by ICI Paints. She swapped out sand-scratched wood floors for quarter-sawn white oak, and dilapidated redwood decks for practical, impervious Trex. Then she chose a custom green for the exteriors that connects, on the home's street side, to a distant mountain view. The front door, a whimsical pink, "gives you a glimpse of the warmth inside," Julie says.

Beside the slipcovered sofa and chairs, there are poufs to rest your feet on and shelves invitingly full of books and scattered seashells the owner has picked up over time. "It's easy to live here simply," she says, "with only a few precious things. When people walk in, they feel comfortable. They can immediately be themselves." 🌿

The wall behind the master bed is painted the same blue that appears in the dining area. The hue extends to the wall outside. Opposite: Julie made sure one of the bedrooms could double as a playroom. She also turned a hall corner into an office nook and painted a shelving piece just inside the front door white. It holds her architectural model of the house. Sources: page 116

