



EXTREME MEASURES

A CLIENT INSPIRES HIS DESIGN TEAM TO OVERCOME THE SPACIAL RESTRICTIONS OF A SMALL LA JOLLA CORNER LOT BY LITERALLY THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX.

WRITTEN BY JORGE S. ARANGO PHOTOGRAPHY BY PABLO MASON

PROJECT DESIGN Fred Gemmell and Lauren Williams, AIA, Matrix Design Studio | INTERIOR DESIGN Fred Gemmell and Lauren Williams, AIA, Matrix Design Studio

ARCHITECTURE Stosh Podeswik, Stosh Thomas Architects PC | HOME BUILDER Ryan Hill, Hill Construction Company

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE Justin Williams, La Jolla Landscape & Design | BEDROOMS 3 | BATHROOMS 4 | SQUARE FEET 3,200

He kept using the word *extreme*,” says designer Fred Gemmell of his client Andrew Canter, who owns and operates a private investment firm. But being extreme—creatively, materially and technically—is exactly what was required in order to create his modern La Jolla house, which sits on an oceanfront property measuring a compact 25 feet wide by 100 feet long. Canter understood the limitations, but he also saw the potential. “I told the design team that I would be putting them to the test!” says Canter. “The concept was to create something rare and extraordinary in every aspect of the design.”

Canter began working on plans with architect Stösh Podeswik, who was involved with the initial design of the structure’s main shell before shifting his focus to construction drawings and handling the complex city and coastal permits. When Canter brought in Gemmell, the structure began to take on its distinctive look. “I spent a lot of time designing and building boats when I first came to San Diego,” says Gemmell, who collaborated on the project with his colleague, architect Lauren Williams. “Since the lot was small and on the water, the house just wanted to feel like a land ship.” As they began designing, the duo demonstrated a creative and economical use of space. “We literally used every inch,” says Williams. “We started with a rectangular lot with setbacks and began sculpting the building’s form to soften it and keep it from becoming a big box.” The resulting curvature along the southern façade is subtle, and, together with cantilevered decks sheathed in titanium that project dramatically toward the water, lends a nautical feel.

Those decks, says builder Ryan Hill, “required a tremendous amount of structural analysis.” But the most daunting challenge for him came when Canter and Gemmell decided to put a swimming pool on the roof. “It forced the structural engineer to completely rethink the way the house would be built,” says Hill. “It went from wood-framed construction to a hybrid of steel and cast-in-place concrete.” The team also created a subterranean garage accessed by a hydraulic ramp, which raises and lowers cars, and they installed a laser-guided turntable inside the door for ease of entering and exiting.

For the levels in between, the living spaces flow together on the main floor, while the master and a guest bedroom are upstairs. As the living area and master bedroom open completely to the elements with pocketing lift-and-slide doors, a cohesive indoor-outdoor palette was essential. As was finding a durable one. “We had to test every material because waves constantly



Fred Gemmell and Lauren Williams gave a La Jolla residence a modern nautical feel with custom pieces and rich materials. A sofa from B&B Italia defines the living area, which features a stainless-steel-and-wood coffee table. Limestone flooring from Tuo Sogno Dream Surfaces Showroom was installed by European Wholesale Countertops and Cabinets.

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Colorful plantings, put in by landscape designer Justin Williams, add a soft natural border to the structure's façade, which features Venetian plaster with vertical elements of Amazon limestone, from Classic Tile & Mosaic. Titanium bands wrap the gravity-defying cantilevered terraces.

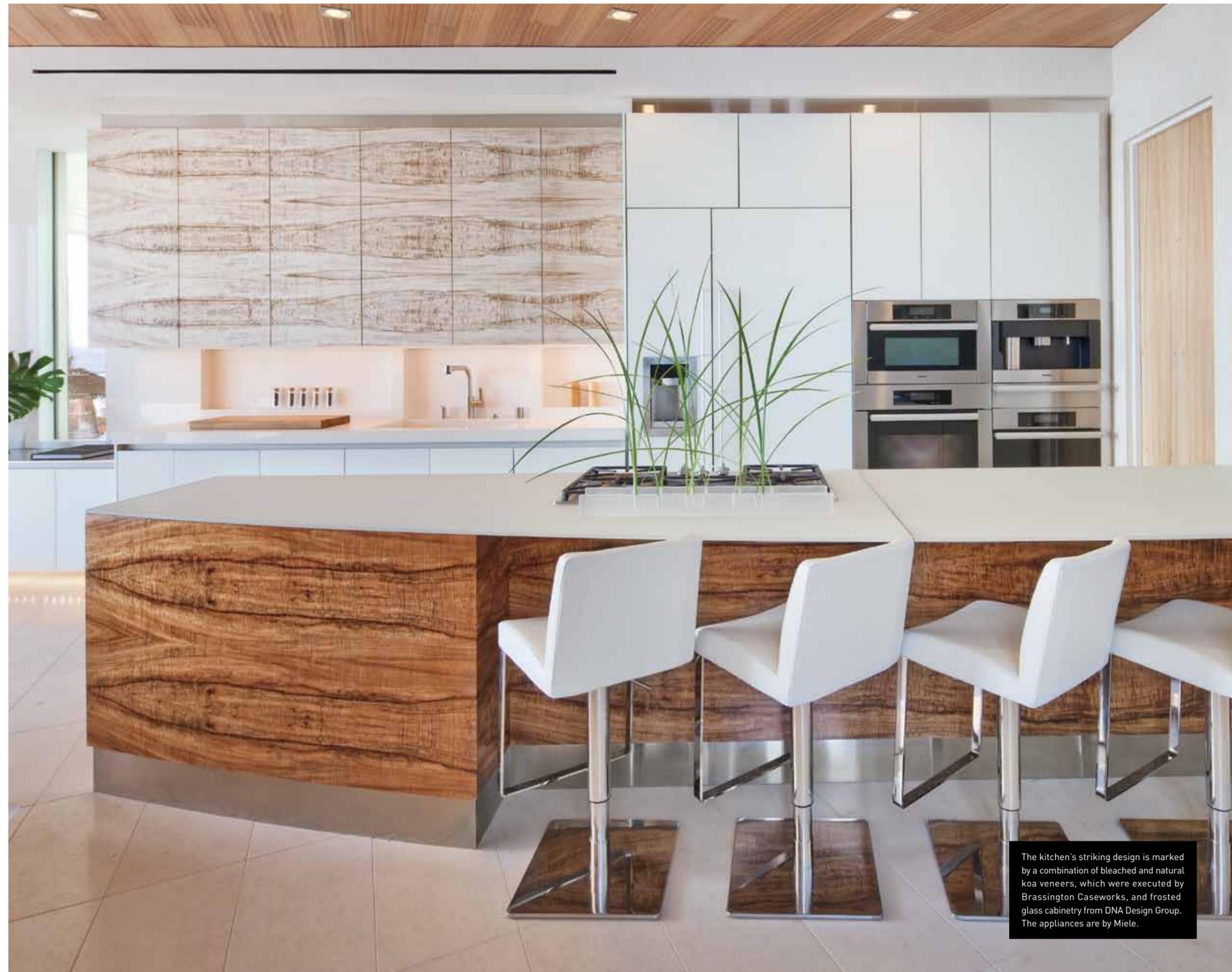


In the dining area, Matrix Design Studio created custom pieces including a corner banquette, fabricated by Ultimate Furniture Design, and a table made with a stainless-steel base and resin top from 3form. The photograph, *Ghost*, is by Peter Lik.

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crash on the sand and throw salt onto the house,” says Gemmell. Outside, Venetian plaster, glass and chiseled limestone define the structure’s form. Inside, ceilings are lined with bleached etimoe and floors are tiled with white limestone. The kitchen cabinetry, island and master suite feature 3,000 square feet of graphically figured Hawaiian koa veneer harvested from a naturally felled tree in Hilo. “It’s an extremely beautiful and rare wood,” says Gemmell. “And it fit Andrew’s desire for something out of the box.”

Gemmell and Williams handled the interior design as well, which acts as a perfect extension of the building. Given the unique curvature of the house, almost all of the furniture—from the living area’s coffee table to the built-in master bedroom’s bed—had to be custom made. “We wanted to create a fine, furniture-grade sculptural interior that was expressive without being too decorative,” says Gemmell.



The kitchen’s striking design is marked by a combination of bleached and natural koa veneers, which were executed by Brassington Caseworks, and frosted glass cabinetry from DNA Design Group. The appliances are by Miele.

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Hill Construction Company built the oceanfront house, which features a subtle curve along one façade. Glass railings provide a border between the house and a sidewalk that slopes down toward the beach. Patterson Engineering devised the steel and cast-in-place concrete frame to support a rooftop swimming pool.



A narrow skylight in the ceiling under the pool illuminates a stairway, which features cantilevered frosted-glass treads. A row of doors, cloaked by koa veneers, conceals closets, light controls, a mechanical room and a bedroom along the second floor.

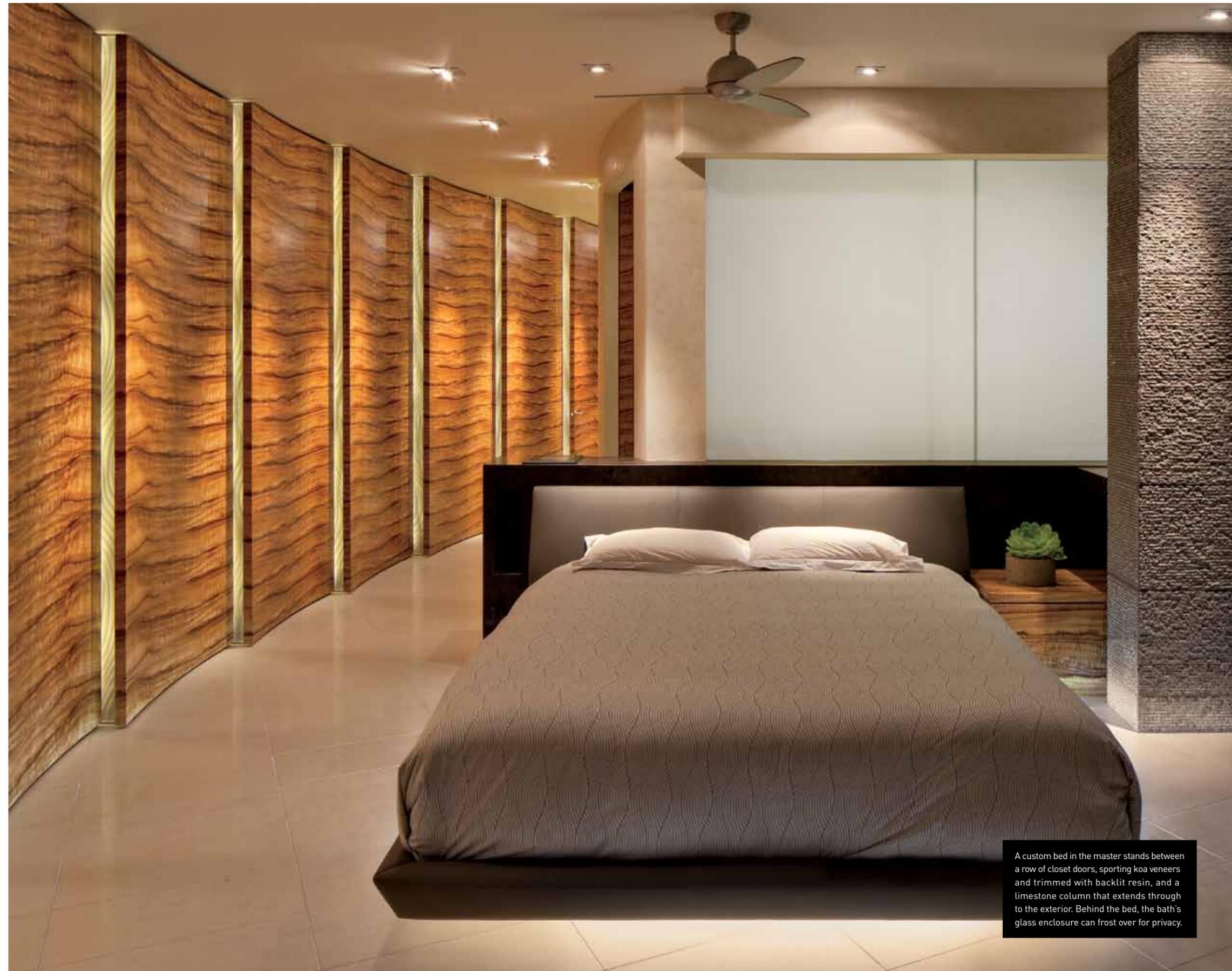


The house's rich textures carry through to a guest room bath, where a vanity and cabinet are highlighted with koa veneers. A Hansgrohe faucet pours into a Victoria + Albert sink, both from Ferguson Bath, Kitchen & Lighting Gallery.

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As the structure maximizes the boundaries of its lot, there wasn't much space left for greenery. But landscape designer and contractor Justin Williams, Lauren's husband, managed to make an impact nonetheless. "It's a tough site," he says. "Everything had to be wind-, salt- and full-sun-resistant." To add colorful elements to the property, he filled rectangular stone boxes with sturdy sculptural plantings of aeonium, echeveria and aloe Hercules and then softened it all with a row of stipa grass.

"Andrew was open to any idea we threw at him," says Williams. "It made the process really fun for all of us involved." Which goes to show what can be possible when a client is adventurous to, well, the extreme. **L**



A custom bed in the master stands between a row of closet doors, sporting koa veneers and trimmed with backlit resin, and a limestone column that extends through to the exterior. Behind the bed, the bath's glass enclosure can frost over for privacy.