

# CALIFORNIA HOMES

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# CONTINENTAL DIVINE

Interior Designer Mark Cutler Blends Elements From Four Continents Into One Fantastic Southern California Home

TEXT BY MELISSA SHERMAN PEARL PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN ELLIS

Australian born interior designer Mark Cutler has achieved much notoriety courtesy of his stints on such television programs as A&E's *Makeover Manmas* and HGTV's *Designer's Challenge*, as well as cameos on MTV and a number of other networks, but it's his ability to create exquisitely personal environments that really makes him a star in the eyes of his clients and colleagues. After working closely for ten years with Beverly Hills based architect William Hablinski of Hablinski-Manion, the designer established Mark Cutler Design, a firm offering interior design, space planning, building design and renovation, lighting, and furniture procurement.

ABOVE International faves make this Southern California craftsman concocted by architect Rob Sichel and interior designer Mark Cutler whose combined inspiration came by way of Australia, Iran, France, Italy, and the United States. RIGHT Interior designer Mark Cutler and architect Rob Sichel worked together to create an entry rich in light, texture, and elegance. Six ornate iron lanterns, steel doors and windows were used as their main natural light by mixing angles and sizes. A diamond shaped pattern carried out through the home is visible in the fabric, artwork, chandeliers and screens commissioned by Cutler.





**RIGHT** Resting atop a chunk wood table carved from a fallen tree is an antique French jar that was retrofitted as a lamp and topped with an antique Indian silk lined lampshade. An original painting by Israeli artist Ari Ventura hangs in the background. **OPPOSITE TOP** Stained walnut ceilings preside over a room featuring original Mark Cutler designs commissioned specifically for this home. The walnut armrests on the tailored sofas invite guests to rest their chosen libations while two coffee tables host a few that could not have been achieved had a single piece of such grand scale been used. A custom Tibetan-made Michael & Kohlberg rug rests atop bleached rifted oak floors in a basket weave pattern. **BELOW LEFT** Comprised of the same simple palette as the rest of the home, this bathing respite's spa-like atmosphere is enhanced by Jerusalem stone complemented by sparkling mosaic tile and Dombracht hardware. **BELOW RIGHT** Comprised of the same simple palette as the rest of the home, this bathing respite's spa-like atmosphere is enhanced by Jerusalem stone complemented by sparkling mosaic tile and Dombracht hardware, two of the home's few polished surfaces.



Los Angeles architect Rob Sinclair, principal of Sinclair Associates Architects, has worked with Cutler on a number of projects and knew that his talent as well as his ability to respond to the client and key in to what they crave would be essential on a particular new home he was developing. For this project Sinclair also contracted landscape architect Alvin Johnson. The homeowners yearned for a sophisticated yet understated backdrop for their casual, family oriented lifestyle. Together the three brainstormed with the clients drawing on classic modernist buildings with an infusion of Mediterranean tradition peppered with Italian, French, Israeli, and Australian influences. This collaborative effort resulted in thick walls, simple detailing with almost no curves or arches, and a plethora of natural light that would stream into every room.

"One of the keys to making a house of this scale feel like a comfortable family home is to give it a calm unity and keep it from feeling like

a different idea in every room," says Cutler. "We developed a color pattern for the entire house comprised of a taupey gold, terracotta, and olive. While some areas focus on one color more than the others, there are elements of the colors in every room."

The challenge in creating such a simple house is that it can become bland. To alleviate that potential, throughout the property Cutler employed a host of subtle patterns and themes that don't really become apparent until more time is spent in the room. From a distance the family room rug seems to have almost no color or pattern at all however the custom colored, handmade rug reveals its true dynamic self almost magically as one gets closer. Continuity was embraced again as Cutler commissioned a myriad of light fixtures from Reborn Antiques based on a preexisting design that furthers the diamond patterns seen in the entry doors.

It is perhaps the touches that go unnoticed to the casual observer that are most striking







By working together early on in the process, landscape architect Alvin Johnson, interior designer Mark Curlier, and architect Rob Sinclair were able to seamlessly create a sublime space that practically serves as an extension of the family room. Perennials Outdoor Fabrics cover exterior furniture by Gian, delivering interior sensibility in a durable package.





LEFT Natural elements in the form of wood, rattan, leather, and casual stone abound in this living room that features one of the property's only aeries—once again used as a fire niche. ABOVE The woven back chairs by Mark Cutler were designed to become almost transparent keeping the focus on the dining room table from the homeowners' long-standing collection. Adding drama: Tan and a found object feel is a Dean Fournier chandelier.

Cutler's use of fabric layering in window treatments and lampshades allow for rich daytime textures that give way to a completely different aesthetic as evening light comes into play. Modern technology has also taken a role in interiors as home theater wiring, audio components, and HVAC are neatly tucked away behind walls and into crevices making them virtually invisible.

In addition to keeping up with his many clients along the California coast, the Los Angeles based designer has recently embarked on creating a new line of home products, Mark Cutler Scents. By reinterpreting traditional rose, jasmine, and gardenia with a fresh, modern sensibility, he has established a home fragrance trio that contributes to morning,

afternoon, and evening ambiance. He is also working on a line of candles with a decidedly masculine flair.

Past, present and future, the values of the people who live in the homes Cutler designs can be readily seen. In this particular project the directive was to create a house without pretense that is as welcoming and warm as those who

reside within its walls. Rooms that are well scaled and beautifully proportioned; simplicity but with an eclectic mix incorporating family pieces with contemporary pieces, and even a couple instances of less than aesthetically pleasing tchotchkes reminiscent of a life well enjoyed tell the story within a home. And this home speaks volumes. **EN**