





# Blending IN Nature and Architecture

Embark on a captivating journey through the creation of this Laguna Beach gem—artfully influenced by the timeless spirit of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater.

By Sam Micatrotto

Photography by Darlene Halaby

Sometimes, the freshest designs have roots in the past. For one Laguna Beach client, the ICONIC Fallingwater residence designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in Mill Run, Pa., inspired the design of a beach house perched above the ocean below. The project began in 2008 and just recently saw its completion by the dream team of Sandra Vila, Rob Williams, Andrew Williams and Daniel Stewart.

“Overall, the goal was to modernize what Frank Lloyd Wright did with Fallingwater and ultimately pay homage to his work. We wanted to strike a balance with how we live today and bring the house to scale,” Rob Williams, principal and lead designer of Studio 6 Architects, says.

It took nine years until the house went under construction. During that time, they worked on bringing the design into the modern era with the collaboration of the client.

The project team was looking for greater expertise to bring this Mid-Century Modern design to life. In 2019, Sandra Vila, the founder and principal designer of Sandra Vila Design House, joined the team with an understanding of what the home needed to fulfill the vision.

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**INTERIOR DESIGN** Sandra Vila Design House, **ARCHITECTURE** Studio 6 Architects,  
**HOME BUILDER** Andrew Williams and Associates, Inc,  
**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE** Daniel Stewart & Associates



With a diverse background in marketing, design and fashion, Vila's signature lies in her ability to transform milieus of any style or genre into one-of-a-kind living spaces. "She presented her ideas to the client and just blew us all away," Rob Williams says. With her intuitive blend of color, form and materiality, she orchestrated a refined and balanced design.

Nestled in the coastal enclave of Laguna Beach, where the ocean's majesty meets rugged cliffs, this residence stands as a testament to artistic ingenuity and architectural brilliance—a true embodiment of California's coastal lifestyle while paying tribute to one of history's most ICONIC homes.

Due to the site's exaggerated slope, "We opted for a step-down design and incorporated a daylight basement to take advantage of the incredible views. There are now almost 180 degrees of ocean visible from all levels of the house," Rob Williams points out.

"We demolished an existing structure, removed 250 truckloads of dirt, then built this home. It was especially challenging given the access to the site," Andrew Williams recalls. "The heavy equipment operator put it best, 'This is like building a ship in a bottle.'"

The horizontal lines, stone overhangs and cantilevered roof design perfectly capture the essence of the warm contemporary style of the Fallingwater design. The home's organic style and innovative engineering have paid tribute to the icon of modern architecture, Fallingwater.













“The goal was to design a home for today’s modern, coastal California lifestyle while paying respect to key details of the original Fallingwater house that the homeowners were inspired to recreate,” Vila says. “One of our favorite design aspects was incorporating a lighter, more contemporary color palette that still felt warm and inviting.”

“In the Fallingwater home, and ours, we utilized a cantilevered design that plays with the horizontal aspects of the house and takes advantage of all the views from the property,” Rob Williams adds.

Builder Andrew Williams also said this build was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for him.

“Building a custom home is an intrinsically coarse and irregular feat that, when done well, brings good results,” he says. “This one is different. The resulting dynamic force from this collection of qualified professionals created a nearly perfect home. It’s all about the architecture and the client experience Studio 6 knew they were creating. After that, everything fell into place.”

As for the interior, a unique mix of bleached walnut, natural stone and large-format Italian brushed ceramic tile enhances the timeless yet modern feel of the home. The 14-foot-high ceilings, clerestory windows and squared-off interior soffits add a special touch, giving the house a distinct and contemporary ambiance and setting it apart from its original style.

Infusing luxury into the design without compromising on the client’s needs and aspirations was a feat gracefully achieved by Vila.

Through collaboration and meticulous attention to detail, the design team created statement pieces that resonate with the homeowners’ tastes, such as a custom-tiered walnut and olive wood vanity inspired by an original Frank Lloyd Wright table for the powder room with hidden storage for toiletries and plumbing access that Vila designed. Nature-inspired surface-mounted lighting reminiscent of Fallingwater’s organic details further highlight the bond between nature and geometric design.

“One of the most memorable experiences on the project was the interior design presentation,” Vila reminisces. “It was the first time we proposed to the client, architect and builder the concept of having the interiors epitomize a modern twist on the architectural style. From the organic finish materials to the nature-inspired lighting to the clean-lined timeless furnishings, the client told us we nailed it.”

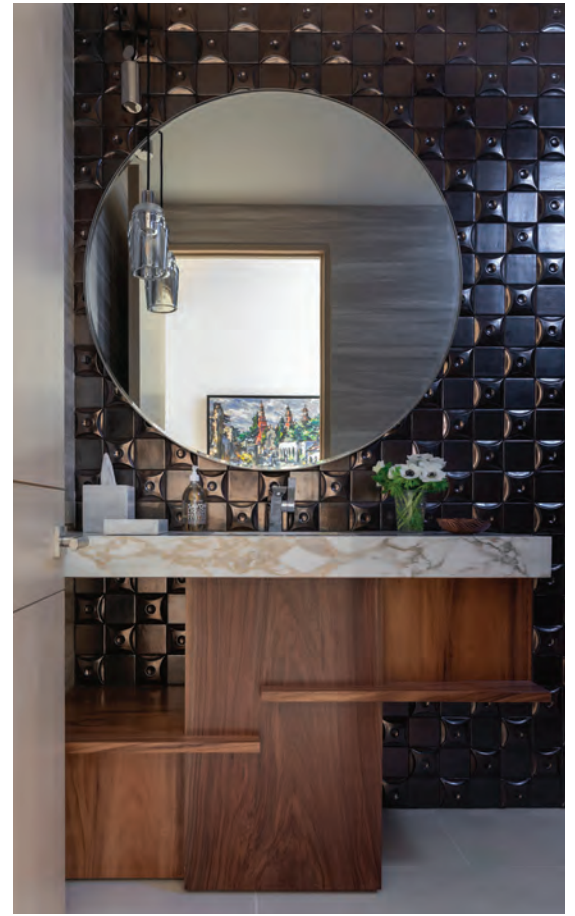
Tilework from Artistic Tile and Syzygy, which Vila sourced, is also reminiscent of Fallingwater’s detailing that inspired this design. Examples included carved limestone in the wine cellar, curved eaves in the powder room and unglazed footed bowls in the master bath. Semi-precious Tiger Eye stone was used on the island in the 2,000-bottle wine cellar. Hypnotic quartzite, with its beautiful warm tones and random pattern, was chosen for the bar to draw in the Fallingwater red window trim color. Vein-cut onyx was selected for its linear representation of the earth for the primary bathroom countertops.











“The owners were very receptive to our ideas for the interior finishes and furnishings,” Vila notes. “Understanding that this home was an opportunity to infuse their tastes into a specific architectural style, the goal was to embody a very specific design style while still providing comfort and functionality.”

The home’s decor is a harmonious reflection of the homeowners’ personalities, with a diverse collection of artwork and cherished mementos from their travels thoughtfully displayed. Furnishings by Joseph Jeup, Altura, and A. Rudin were selected to complement the owners’ memorabilia. Hand-plastered wallcoverings from Holly Hunt, Maya Romanoff, Scalamandre and Phillip Jeffries adorn the walls, adding a tactile component. Luxe performance textiles, carefully chosen to withstand the coastal environment, contribute to the warm, neutral backdrop, allowing pops of the owners’ favorite colors to accentuate the home.

The Fallingwater residence captures the essence of timeless design and the majesty of the Pacific Ocean. This Laguna Beach abode embodies the very spirit of Vila and Rob Williams’ artistic mastery and passion for creating environments that transcend time.

With each element carefully chosen and every detail thoughtfully crafted, this home is a living masterpiece that stands as a testament to the magic that can be created when talent, vision and creativity converge. ❶