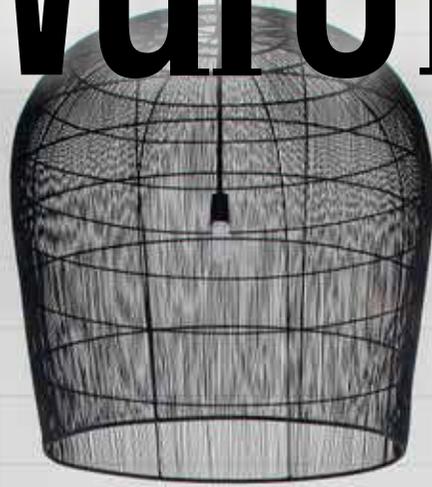


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SPOTLIGHT

CASTLE BY THE SEA

A **CREATIVE BUILDER**
CONSTRUCTS A
STUNNING **SURFSIDE**
DWELLING IN
BETHANY BEACH.

BY AMELIA RODRIGUEZ
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DANA HOFF



Marnie Oursler's vision was to create contemporary spaces with warm, coastal finishes that not only look attractive but also have a welcoming feel. The central floating staircase is a work of art within itself, connecting three of the four floors.



The kitchen boasts double porcelain islands for an abundance of seating, along with two sinks, ample counter prep space and unobstructed ocean views.



Wall-to-wall windows continue into the master bedroom and open en suite bathroom, which features floor-to-ceiling porcelain, a double slipper tub, zero entry shower and views of the Delaware coastline.



Whenever Marnie Oursler starts a new design project, the challenge lies in the fact that there's no blueprint—literally. The builder, designer and owner of Marnie Custom Homes works directly with families to construct their ideal abode, from mood boards to the final nail.

"I never get bored," she declares, "because we've never built that particular house before. ...Most houses we build, I've touched every inch—exterior design and interior design."

Surfside in Bethany Beach is one such project.

The 7,600-square-foot part-time residence was designed in partnership with architect Scott Edmonson. As plans for the home took shape, the pair kept its location in mind. While inspired by modern California design,



The main living areas feature a detailed cathedral ceiling and a two-story fireplace with linear surround made of an entire slab of porcelain, which looks like concrete, for a modern twist.



An outdoor shower and laundry unit is ideal for keeping a day in the sand and surf out of the house.

the four-story beach house nevertheless fits right in along the Delaware coast, thanks to its more old-fashioned pointed roofline. The interior's muted blues and grays, and clean whites, match the shore just beyond the home's back walls, which are almost entirely

Continued on page 30

Walls of glass doors open to a full-length waterfront deck off the main floor. The decks add 1,400 square feet of outdoor living space.



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Valorie Marek, Executive Director, SOAR



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glass. An additional 1,400 square feet of deck space affords even more opportunities to enjoy the views. Furnishings from Restoration Hardware complete the home's clean yet cozy aesthetic.

The surrounds are especially spectacular from the fourth floor, which is entirely dedicated to a spacious master suite, which consists of a private sitting room, roomy closets and a private deck, plus a spectacular bathroom with a veined porcelain shower and a luxurious free-standing double-slipper tub. Oursler placed the vanity (complete with his-and-hers sinks) on the wall facing the ocean, so anyone walking in is greeted by the stunning sight of the sea reflected in the vanity mirror.

While the top floor provides a private escape, Surfside's lower levels are all about entertaining. Durable porcelain countertops, a 48-inch range, a generously sized butler's pantry and multiple sinks and fridges make prepping snacks for guests a breeze. Up to nine visitors can

“*While inspired by modern California design, the four-story beach house nevertheless fits right in along the Delaware coast.*”

perch at the kitchen's two islands. Another 10 can settle at a large dining table nearby.

The airy, open floor plan features a seamless flow between the kitchen, dining room, bar and lounge areas. The great room boasts dramatic shiplap cathedral ceilings and a comfy sectional for relaxing in front of the television or curling up beside the concrete fireplace on cool nights. Balmy summer days are best spent out on two decks, perfect for grilling or just watching the waves.

In addition to six standard bedrooms, the home's grown-up, summer camp-style bunk room—a Marnie signature—comfortably fits six king-size beds and two twins, each equipped with light switches, outlets and nooks for water, phones and books. There's extra storage underneath the bunks, too, all in accordance with Oursler's mission to make each space as practical as possible. “It's one thing to design something that looks amazing,” she says. “But you can never use it if you can't change the sheets.”

Addressing the residents' core needs without compromising on luxury required creative solutions. Those spectacular windows, for example, can let in a lot of heat. Oursler avoided blocking even an inch of the home's shoreline vistas with bulky valances by building window treatment cavities into the ceiling. Need privacy or protection from the sun? Simply hit a button and the blinds descend.

The ground-floor exterior space makes the most of its shoreline location. A clear path to the beach makes toting umbrellas and coolers from the spacious storage area in the backyard a breeze, while an outdoor shower and laundry unit is ideal for keeping a day in the sand and surf out of the house.

Surfside's open concept presented its own difficulties: With so few interior supporting walls, the home's support comes primarily from sturdy steel framing, which can be hard to work around when inputting essentials like ducts and plumbing. But Oursler sees architectural “toughies” as an opportunity to play. “It's



Steel framing was key for the entire house to ensure it withstands the wind. Arctic white James Hardie cedar shake siding, black trim and cable railings are among this home's exceptional exterior elements.

like, oh, we can make it cool. We can hide the steel, turn it into a coffered ceiling, and nobody would know,” she explains. “That's what makes it exciting and fun.”

Even more rewarding? Getting to see the look on clients' faces when they walk into their finished home for the first time. “They're moving in and they're just [shedding] tears of joy,” Oursler describes.

“It didn't look like a house to them for so long. And then suddenly they're living in it and they're like, ‘Oh, my gosh. This is ours.’”

Although Surfside's residents eagerly followed the building process, they found themselves floored by the final product. Of course, creating a showstopper is all in a day's work for Oursler: “The goal is to make a work of art every time we build a house.” DT

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