

OREGON MODERN MASTERPIECE / CARIBBEAN STYLE IN THE LESSER ANTILLES

# OCEAN HOME

The Luxury Coastal Lifestyle Magazine

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■ CUSTOM HOMES

## SURFSIDE SETTING

MARNIE OURSLER DESIGNS COASTAL HOMES WITH A MODERN VIBE ALONG DELAWARE'S COAST.

BY MARY GRAUERHOLZ  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DANA HOFF



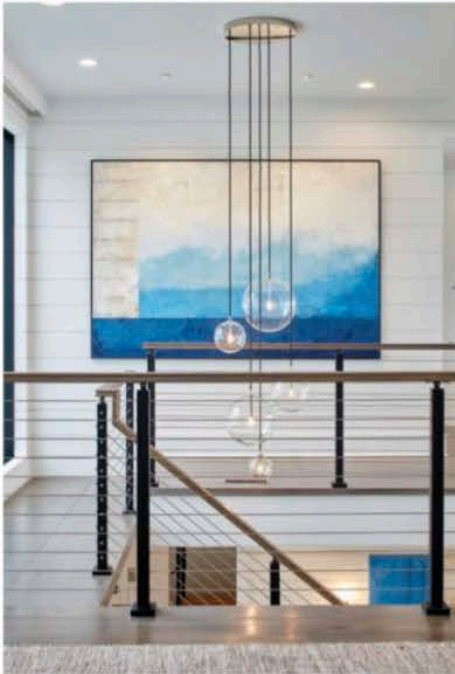
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In this waterfront home designed for a veteran, 95 percent of the materials are made in the United States.

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Accolades flow to Marnie Oursler as steadily as the ocean tides. More meaningful to Oursler, though, is her pure love for design and construction. As the president of Marnie Custom Homes in Bethany Beach, Delaware, Oursler holds a star position as a source of distinctive homes on the Delaware beachfront and nearby Fenwick Island.

Oursler's success is reflected in her distinguished background: a seat on the board of directors at the Duke University Fuqua School of Business's Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation; an Entrepreneur of the Year Stevie Award for Women in Business; and a spot as a finalist in the Woman of the Year 2020 Awards sponsored by the National Association of Home Builders.

"I think of our homes as transitional coastal style," says Oursler: bright and spacious, with a modern vibe. Surfside, an Oursler design in North Bethany Beach in collaboration with nearby SEA Studio Architects, is bright, open, and inviting. As visitors enter the home through Surfside's substantial glass front door, they are greeted with light-filled spaces, a floating staircase, and spectacular ocean views.

The ocean views, in fact, were primary on

The home was designed in collaboration with SEA Studio Architects; the result is bright, open, and inviting.

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the homeowners' list of desires, along with space for entertaining. Surfside brings this with gusto. The home also offers plenty of beautiful focal points, including a two-story fireplace in the main living area, a beauty constructed of slab porcelain, which has the look of concrete for a touch of modernity. A detailed cathedral ceiling and Cabrillo Pendant light fixture from Restoration Hardware draw the eye upward.

"You think of black as typically a heavy color," Oursler says of the light fixture. "But when you pair it with white, it softens the overall effect so it's not overwhelming, but you still see the sharp contrast." Just outside the wall-to-wall sliding glass door is a spacious deck with separate grilling and dining areas.

Measuring 7,650 square feet, Surfside is larger than most of Oursler's designs, but retains an intimate warmth. The inspiration was California modern design, she says. "The goal was to create contemporary spaces with warm, coastal finishes that are attractive and welcoming."

Behind the cozy intimacy is incredible strength. "With few interior supporting walls, we used steel framing to withstand strong ocean winds," Oursler adds. "This came with its own challenges in installing essentials like ducts and plumbing. We had to get creative with the design, but that's the fun part."

Guests at the owners' frequent gatherings are often drawn to the kitchen, which offers double islands, two sinks, and plenty of room. Custom cabinets cleverly hide refrigeration units. Three types of countertop materials give the space an artful look. The main countertops are constructed with Calacatta Extra porcelain by Atlas Plan with wrapped edges.

Wall-to-wall windows continue into the primary bedroom and en suite bathroom, which features floor-to-ceiling porcelain, a double tub, and zero entry shower, with no barriers to its entry. Oursler maintained the home's clean lines in the bathroom, to accentuate the veins in the porcelain and the incredible ocean views. The entire window surround is porcelain to match the back wall of the shower. For the homeowners, it is an ultimate sanctuary. Floor-to-ceiling glass



The kitchen offers double islands, two sinks and plenty of seating. Just beyond the dining area, sliding glass doors lead to a spacious deck.



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doors lead to an outdoor deck, with automatic blinds for privacy.

The home's exterior—James Hardie cedar shake siding in Arctic White, accented with black trim, cable railings, and wall-to-wall windows oceanside—establish the home's strong sense of place.

Oursler embraces challenges. Many of her homes incorporate reclaimed and recycled materials, including Delaware's first house certificated to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards.

Oursler also designed and built one of the first houses in the United States constructed with at least 95 percent of products made in the United States. "My client, a veteran, said he wanted all products to come from the U.S.," she recalls. A big boon was building relationships with companies, including Hubbardton Forge, which manufactures fixtures in Castleton, Vermont. "I did my research and dived in. It was fun. It was hard."

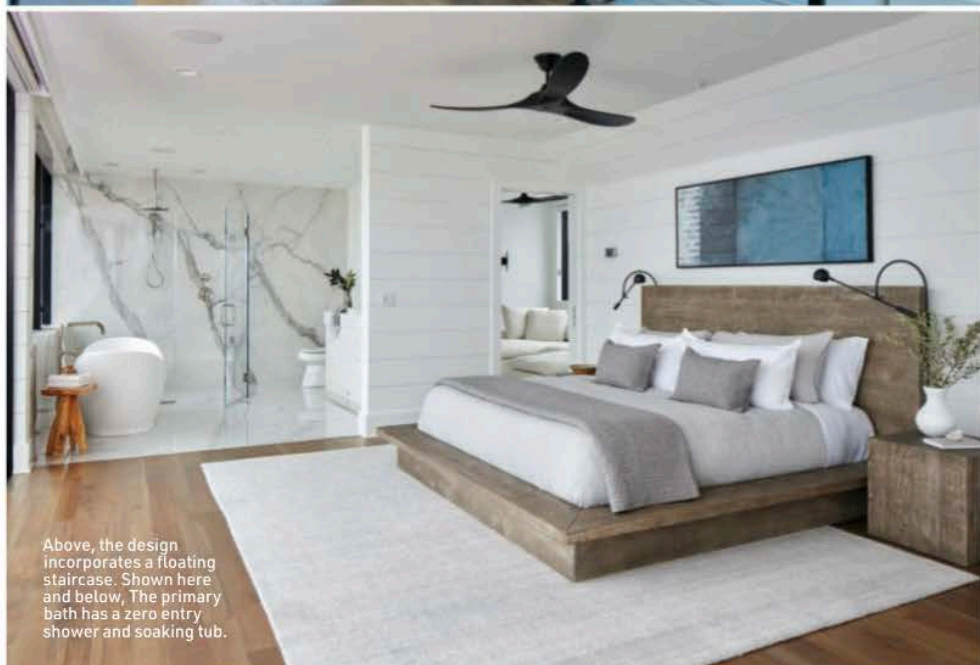
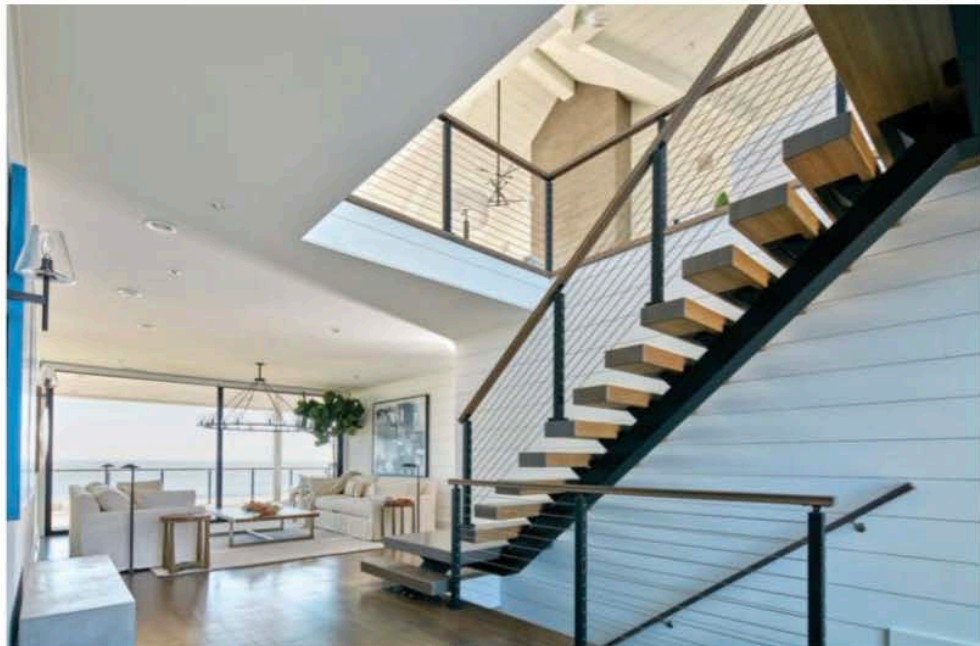
In 2020, when many companies were hampered by COVID, Marnie Custom Homes experienced its best year yet. She and her nine employees built a record 13 homes that year, one in handicap-accessible style. Since its inception, the company has built more than 120 beach houses.

Oursler realizes that her path to success is unconventional and that her position is unusual; just 13 percent of construction-related companies are owned by women. Underlying her philosophy is a love of the process and encouragement from her parents as a child.

"My parents inspired me," she says of her childhood in southern Maryland. Her father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were builders. "My dad had me out on job sites with my brother when we were little, sweeping and picking up trash. There wasn't a question about being a girl. In fact, I never knew there were so few women in construction."

Oursler began her career when she bought a fixer-upper seven blocks from the beach, renovated it, and sold it for a hefty profit. "I started calling myself a builder," she says. "It took a lot of work and a lot of grit. But I had nothing to lose." ♦

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [marnieoursler.com](http://marnieoursler.com)



Above, the design incorporates a floating staircase. Shown here and below, The primary bath has a zero entry shower and soaking tub.



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