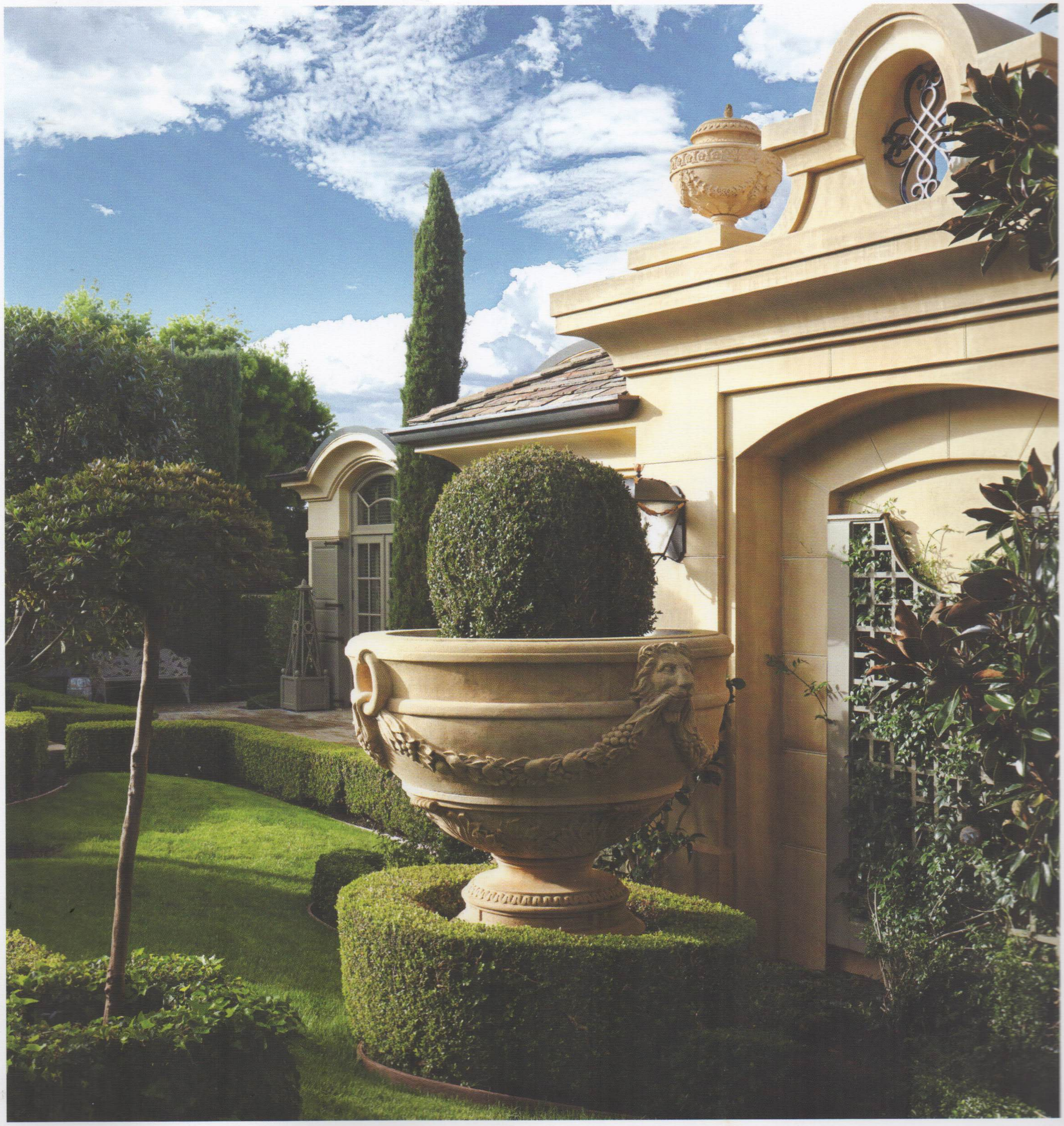
ICONIC HOME



VOLUME THREE

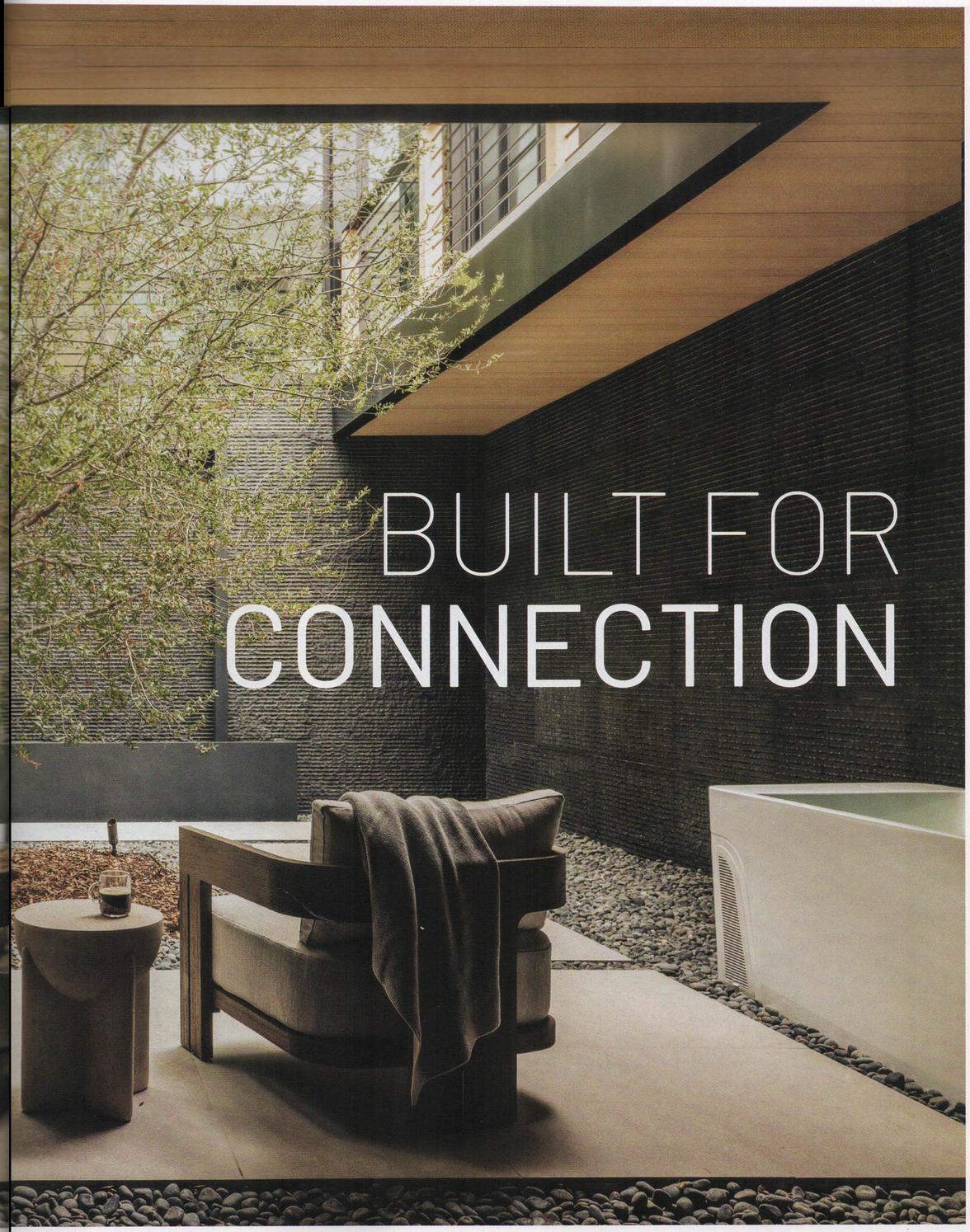
BUILT FOR CONNECTION

This 6,500-square-foot home adapts easily from two-person living to a house full of returning kids and friends

By Katherine Lawless
Photography by Lance Gerber

BUILDER RDM General Contractors. **ARCHITECT** Rory Foubister. **DESIGNER** Melissa Morgan Interiors. **LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT** Michael Wilkes, Laguna Beach.







Along a quiet street in Dana Point, Calif., what is now a 6,505-square-foot contemporary residence began with much more modest aims: a remodel. The homeowners already had a house on the site that was comfortable and functional, but as conversations progressed, it became clear that incremental updates were not going to meet their needs.

"When we initially met the client and started this project, they intended for it to be a remodel," says architect Rory Foubister. "It was a nice house, but for the goals and the aspirations that they had, the remodel was just never gonna satisfy what they really wanted."

That shift to new construction allowed the team to reconsider everything from orientation to circulation. The clients, a family with older children preparing to leave for college, wanted a home that could accommodate both everyday routines and periods when the house would be full again. "It's an amazing family, they have kids that are a little older, like teenagers going off to college," Foubister says. "We really wanted to make sure they had a place where they can hang out."

Luckily, the site supported large-scale architectural rethinking. "It was a nice flat site with a little peekaboo view over the ocean below," he says. "The site actually yielded very few headaches or constraints, and it was a nice big rectangle. Good view, good geology. It was kind of an architect's dream in the sense that there were no headaches."

From there, the project came together through a new collaboration between Foubister Architects, Melissa Morgan Design, and RDM General Contractors. Although the firms had not worked together previously, the partnership proved effective enough to continue beyond this project.

"This was actually our first time collaborating with these guys," Foubister says. "We've done several projects with them since, but this was a new team that was put together for this project specifically."

A NATURAL FOCAL POINT

The design itself centers on a courtyard positioned at the middle of the floor plan. A single tree sits in the center of the home space and serves as the primary focal point around which daily life is oriented. "It's lovely because it allows natural light to











percolate through the entire floor plan," Foubister says.

Rather than relying on perimeter glazing alone, the team used the courtyard to introduce daylight from within. This approach affects how the house is experienced throughout the day. "The way the house is designed is to allow the morning light to stream through the tree," Foubister explains. "And then in the evening time, you're going to get that golden sunshine coming in through the whole house."

Materially, the exterior sets the tone with a restrained palette and clean lines. The team used a combination of brick and metal to add visual interest without introducing unnecessary complexity.

That same discipline continues inside. The interiors, led by Melissa Morgan Design, are defined by a neutral palette layered with texture rather than contrast. Cased doorways add definition between rooms while maintaining a cohesive look throughout the house. There is also a more direct visual connection between the exterior and interior. Thanks to a floor-to-ceiling window-door that opens to the patio, the exterior stonework wraps into the living room, where it is used as the fireplace surround.

Another opening to the patio further supports that indoor-outdoor relationship. In the main living area, a large kitchen window also opens directly onto the patio.

"The kitchen's got all of the bells and whistles from the hidden coffee bar in the living room to the pass-through window from the kitchen out to the BBQ," Foubister says. "Having that indoor-outdoor connection through the kitchen and BBQ is kind of phenomenal." Pocket doors allow the wall to open fully, giving the kitchen flexibility as either a contained workspace or an extension of the patio. "You can open it up and it all disappears and just enhances that indoor-outdoor flow," he adds.

DESIGNED FOR FAMILY

Programmatically, the house is organized to support a range of uses depending on how many people are present. "The other feature that I love about this house is it's just about the right size where, if it's just the husband and the wife, and the kids are







gone for college, it lives small," Foubister says. "But when the whole family is in town and the kids are there and they've got friends over, they can also live big." That flexibility is achieved through a combination of defined zones, like a dog sleeping room or a prep pantry and family-friendly gathering spaces.

Private spaces are positioned to balance proximity and separation. The office is located to capture ocean views while maintaining acoustic privacy. "The office is positioned in such a way that the homeowner can still get sneak views through the property towards the ocean, but more importantly, he's got some acoustic separation from the kids playing video games," Foubister says. The primary suite is similarly set apart from the secondary bedrooms to reduce noise while maintaining connection.

The lower level introduces a different set of functions, focused on recreation and informal use. "The lower level was really designed to be like a magnet, that destination that people want to go to," Foubister says. It includes a gym with access to a cold plunge in a lower courtyard, as well as a music room that doubles as a guest space. "It's downstairs as its own acoustic bunker. So they can blast music and play guitars and pianos and things like that without keeping everyone up at night."

Additional entertainment features were included to entice the children and their friends to hang out at the house. "In the basement they've got a Pop-A-Shot and they've got a whiteboard, which is where they do their homework," he says. The space also includes an oversized sectional, a billiards table, a dart board, a poker table and a kitchenette intended for casual gatherings.