



Dream House DISCOVERY

BY MARLEY McCAUGHEY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT BENSON

Passionate homeowners preserve a storied home with style

Four years ago, one trip to an estate sale in Point Loma's wooded neighborhood brought Matt and Amy Pearlmutter to a startling realization: The house they were living in (just a few blocks away) with daughters, Delilah (now 9) and Lulu (now 7) was not their dream home. No. Instead it was the midcentury-modern house next door to the tag sale.

Matt could tell the home must be something special. He had a longstanding love affair with midcentury-modern design. His adoration and knowledge for the style came from his stepdad, architect Philo Jacobson, who worked side-by-side with well-known Los Angeles modernist architect Craig Ellwood.

When Matt and Amy delved a little further, they discovered the residence was de-

signed in the 1950s by famed architect Sim Bruce Richards, a student of Frank Lloyd Wright. Matt hadn't been wrong about the home's noteworthiness. But the structure needed updating and its untouched state intimidated previous potential buyers. Matt and Amy, however, saw past the floor-to-ceiling wood paneling and small dated kitchen. They fell in love with the home's rich design history and pedigree and the



This page, clockwise: Delilah Pearlmutter (pitching) and her sister Lulu (batting) are avid softball players; Dad Matt is their at-home coach and biggest fan. • Lulu loves dinosaurs and tributes to her prehistoric obsession are sprinkled throughout the home. • Matt and the girls head out to the backyard to grab Blue (the family bunny) from her hutch.

Facing page: The Pearlmutter family—Matt; Lulu, 7; Delilah, 9; and Amy—are all smiles (and style) in their backyard.



Matt chats with the girls as they lounge on the sofa in the outdoor living area, styled by his wife Amy.



expansive backyard, where they have since added a shed-turned-playhouse, a family garden, a batting cage that Matt and the girls use for softball practice every morning and a hutch for Blue, the family bunny.

Other than essential roofing and air-conditioning repairs, the couple and their girls moved in and lived in the home, unaltered. But after a few years, they agreed that, yes, some updates *had* to be made.

“We were beyond thrilled to be able to purchase this historic home and were very hesitant to make changes,” Matt says. “We wanted to leave it like a museum, but we couldn’t live like that forever.”

Matt and Amy began hunting online for the perfect interior designer to bring their home into the 21st century while maintaining its midcentury soul. Separately, they both came across—and loved—the work of Christie May, principal interior designer and owner of Rockwell Interiors. They decided to give her a test run and hired her to transform the garage into a lounge.

Christie jumped right in, embraced the tight budget and got inventive. She painted three walls a warm gray, wallpapered the fourth in a graphic pattern by Kelly Wearstler and installed a custom-designed walnut media center on it. She hung brass light fixtures to add warmth and shine and highlight the family’s collection of books (inherited from the previous owners), eclectic accessories and original artwork.

Matt and Christie really collaborated on this space. It’s their “funky” brainchild. Christie created a unique coffee table using six bronze, mirrored-cube side tables. The sextet anchor the tufted leather sofa, two midcentury-modern lounge chairs and a vintage Laverne chair from Philo—all authentic midcentury furnishings from Matt’s collection, which he started nearly 20 years ago, when he was in his early 20s.

“Working with Christie felt so comfortable right away,” Amy says. “We had such a great connection with her and felt very confident hiring her for the full-home remodel after collaborating on the lounge.”

Christie had her work cut out for her





with the rest of the house. Besides the wood paneling, green carpeting blanketed most of the floors and old skylights and windows provided very little natural light. The house, though a generous nearly 3,500 square feet, felt dark and cave-like at times.

Installing additional light fixtures proved to be challenging: The home doesn't have an attic, so there's no cavity between the ceiling and the roof to install traditional recessed lighting. Christie created faux built-out ceiling panels and found European ultrathin LED can lights to avoid using dated track lighting.

Christie worked to preserve the integrity of the home's original design while making it more functional for her clients. She reworked the floorplan to create a new layout that opened up the enclosed kitchen to the main living area and increased the size of the foyer by removing an old coat closet.

Christie's team replaced all the windows and doors, except the front door (which had to be preserved due to the semi-historic classification) but added a sidelight and windows to let more light in. Clerestory



This page, top to bottom: Matt supervises the making of the girls' guacamole while Amy fields a phone call. • Lulu asks Amy to test the guacamole for any modifications or additions. It's delicious, by the way.

Facing page: Though the fireplace was altered during the remodel, designer Christie May of Rockwell Interiors made sure to retain architect Sim Bruce Richards' iconic copper hood.





Above: The inset shelves in the garage-turned-lounge are original. Keeping them was cost-friendly and preserved another element of the midcentury design. **Facing page, clockwise:** Lulu and Delilah cozy up on the extra-deep window seat to watch cartoons. • A black accent wall, graphic carpeting and a trio of abstract art prints bring drama to the dining room. • The sunken lounge features a light fixture that Matt and Christie agreed was essential for the “vibe.”

windows above the new, enlarged sliding glass doors and a thorough cleaning of the existing skylights preserved the original architecture and instantly brightened the large living space.

White oak flooring replaced the green carpet. It wasn't the tile Amy initially thought she wanted, but she loves the outcome. “We really appreciated that Christie advocated for all her suggestions with such infectious confidence,” Amy says. “She was constantly convincing us to trust her, and it always paid off.”

Everyone agreed that the copper hood above the fireplace in the living room would remain. Richards included similar but unique versions in all his projects. So

Christie designed a new fireplace around it. The adjacent window seat, deep enough to be used as a daybed but perfect for Delilah and Lulu to lounge on and read or watch TV, floats above a cozy birch woodpile. Christie situated the custom sectional sofa so the fireplace—not the TV—would be the focal point in the room.

The Pearlmutter's originally wanted the kitchen to be completely open to the living room, but a key support wall couldn't be moved. Instead they ended up with a much-needed extra wall of kitchen storage and a bar that connects the spaces and provides a window into the living room. The ultra-chic, waterfall bar with its swanky bronze-mirrored shelving unit has now be-

come one of the hubs of the home. Whenever Matt and Amy entertain, which is often, everyone ends up congregated around the bar.

Amy wanted a white kitchen with lacquered cabinets, lots of storage and a double-sided waterfall island—all of which Christie delivered. To bring contrast and warmth to the stark space, Christie introduced a black marble backsplash, dark-stained oak under-cabinets, a rich rug and rustic Italian stools. She embraced the existing skylight and paired it with a hip new light fixture.

The reimagined dining room is all drama. Graphic black-and-white wall-to-wall carpeting commands the floor. The far wall



Acing the Accessories Game

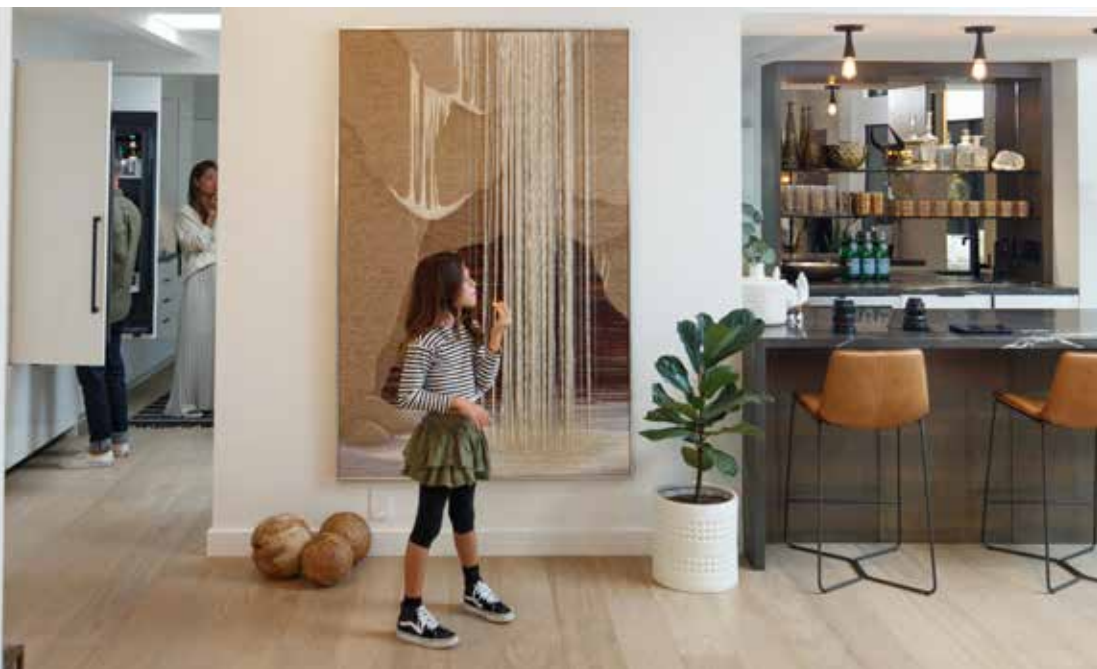
AMY PEARLMUTTER has a flair for finding fabulous home accessories—whether she’s shopping online, in a department store or at a thrift shop. Plus, she shares where she goes to add to her collection of vintage dinnerware (above).

Check out Amy’s go-to places to shop and her tips for styling at sandiegohomegarden.com



This page, top to bottom: Matt and the girls talk details of their day at the bar. • The guest bedroom features a groovy room divider as a headboard.

Facing page, clockwise from top left: Amy chose wallpaper with pink-and-red lips to add whimsy to Delilah and Lulu’s shared en-suite bathroom. • The master bedroom is the only area of the home that retains the wood wall paneling. • Christie packed a punch in the powder room with a mirror, pendant light and black plumbing fixtures. • Amy scored the fiber art hanging behind Delilah at a thrift shop in Palm Springs.



wears black, and in the center of the room sits the family's vintage antelope table base and chairs. The wall of cabinets hides Amy's vast vintage collection.

A bright white hallway, stripped of paneling and carpet, was bedecked with hinged-arm wall sconces that light the path from the main living area to the lounge and bedrooms.

In the guest room, a retro room divider becomes a groovy headboard. In the girls' room, Amy painted a pair of matching four-poster beds bright pink and wallpapered

one wall in their en-suite bathroom with pink-and-red lips.

The master suite is the only room that retains the original wood wall paneling. And there's a debate about whether or not the couple will keep it. Amy wants an accent wall that's not all wood; Matt's sentimental to the last unaltered piece of the home's original design.

There are still unrenovated rooms left to makeover, but after the six-month-long remodel, Amy was anxious to start decorating. Throughout the renovation,

she'd been gathering objects, artwork and accessories.

Having all the furniture (much of which came from Matt's amassed collection) and decor ready to go made for an easy transition from construction to living.

Three weeks after all of the renovations were completed, Amy and Matt felt like they'd always been living this way.

"We have no regrets," Amy says. "Christie totally delivered on everything she promised and gave us the exact opposite of a cookie-cutter home." ❖