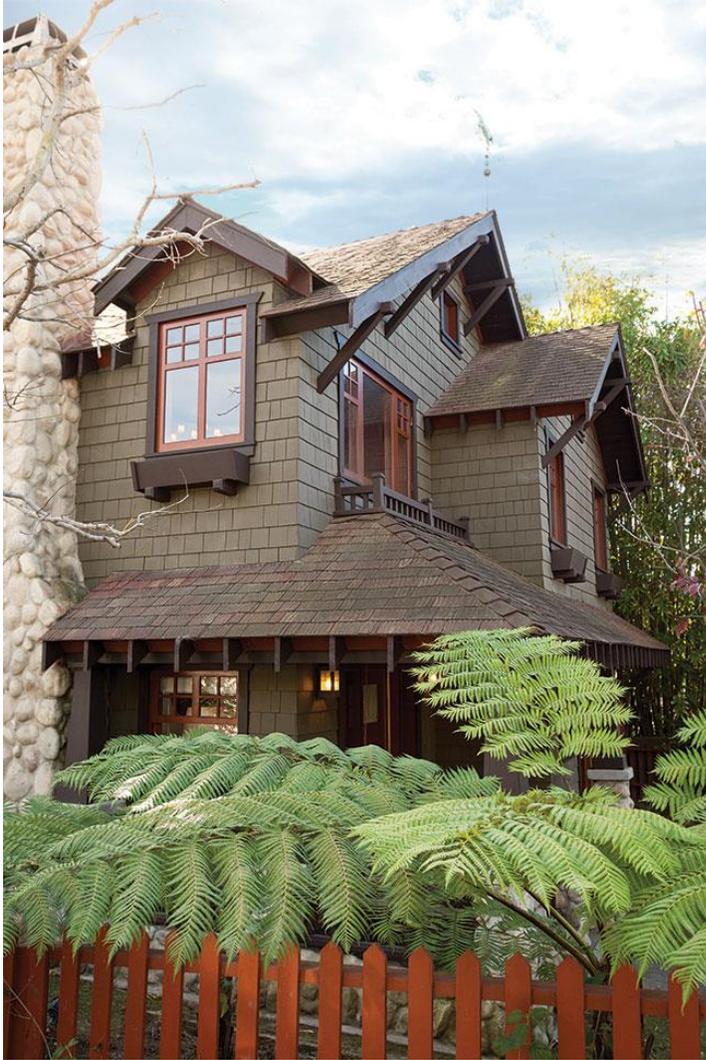# Among the Trees

A Craftsman-style bungalow enjoys an enchanting South Bay setting.

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If you didn't know you were in the South Bay, you would think you were in an enchanted forest when gazing upon the Manhattan Beach home of Sascha and Michael Henry. With peaked gables, shingles and a wooden garden gate, the house extends a beguiling invitation.

Perched on a corner lot, it is afforded the luxury of trees and a small entrance garden. The front porch beckons one to step through the gate into timeless elegance of Craftsman-inspired architecture and understated interiors.

The most talented interior designers are adept at making an interior seem as if no professional ever touched the space, because the home so fully represents the owner. To that end, Caroline Burke was masterful in this home design. Sascha explained to Caroline, "We want the house to be warm, practical and specific to our family."

Additionally, Sascha explained to Caroline, "We've got two kids, and we don't want to have to tiptoe around precious things." A previous owner had remodeled the house, so an extensive renovation was not necessary. Instead, Caroline decided to preserve certain design elements and play up the strengths of the house in order to incorporate all of the rooms into a cohesive home design.

The house had strong Craftsman design influences, including wood-paneled ceilings, wood-trimmed windows and a fairly traditional floor plan with a compact, designated dining room. Furthermore, there were design influences in place that Sascha and Michael didn't want to alter, including the sea-blue tiles in the kitchen.

The large, long, galley-style kitchen is a focal point upon entering the home, and the space is large enough to provide a big breakfast bar as well as a dining nook underneath a window. Caroline created a seamless transition to the dining room by using seagrass on the walls that matches the color of the kitchen tiles. With one wall lined as a lighted wine cellar and the others encased in ocean-colored seagrass, the room is intimate and inviting.

The children are enormously creative, and art projects abound throughout the house. From paintings mounted under glass tabletops to wall-hung collages, their art is visible in every room. Therefore, it was important to Sascha and Michael that the children have a designated place to create.

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Caroline came up with the idea to create opposing desks in the family room, so they can either create art or work on homework. Additionally, it provides the opportunity for the entire family to gather in one room—whether creating or watching television. Continuing the creative thread upstairs, Caroline worked with both children to pick their room colors and create the space they wanted. A lighted, built-in fish tank is anchored underneath their son's high bunk bed, while pastel colors create a soft cocoon for their daughter. The master bedroom has high gabled ceilings and a surprising number of windows that permit the residents a view of the trees dancing just outside.

The only finish changes made to the house include refinishing the floors and converting a previous television cabinet into hidden drawers for DVDs, art supplies and books. The beautiful wood finishes of the floors and ceilings provide aesthetic warmth to the house and reinforce the Craftsman influence.

Perhaps the most enchanting space of the house is upstairs in Michael's office. It's actually a loft with a railing that overlooks the entrance and living room. With the rich, paneled ceiling above, beautiful hardwoods on the floor and a railing instead of walls, the space feels like a secret room floating above. High windows in the walls permit views of the trees that surround the house, and the whole effect is that of a tree house for an office.

"We told Caroline to take it and run with it," says Sascha. "She did everything, from the custom chandeliers to the upholstery to selecting the colors, and we love it," she continues. For this Manhattan Beach family, Caroline Burke made this Craftsman-style home come alive in a charming way that perfectly reflects their family.