

ModernLuxury

ORANGE COUNTY

RACHEL
BROSNAHAN
Simply Marvelous

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Many Moods

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PLAYA MESA PHOTO BY FOXES AND WOLVES; ON THE MARKET PHOTO BY ERIC HERNANDEZ



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LIVING WALLS

A life of luxury awaits in Corona del Mar, where custom home designer and builder Tonya Sampson Nicholson has crafted her most enchanting oasis yet.

By Alexandria Abramian // Photography by Eric Hernandez

As a long-term resident of Corona del Mar's coveted flower streets, Tonya Sampson Nicholson was more than familiar with the area's Eastern Seaboard-leaning architectural proclivities: Cue the Hamptons-style homes and supersize Cape Cod saltboxes. And while the beach-chic abodes make up one of the quaintest collections of streets in Orange County, as a custom home designer and builder, Sampson Nicholson, founder of Alpha Property Development, had other designs in mind.

"I hope for that niche client who wants to be in a beautiful area and wants

something different and special," says Sampson Nicholson, who, after a career working for major tract home developers, now creates one-of-a-kind residences that defy duplication. "One of the things that appeals to me about building here in Corona del Mar is that you get to have more fun, more leeway in the design. There's an opportunity for product differentiation that you don't get everywhere."

In the case of 607 Begonia Ave., listed by Katie Rollins of Surterre Properties (surterreproperties.com) for a cool \$4.599 million, differentiation starts curbside with jaw-dropping metal cladding that covers



From top: A 6-foot-wide quartzite fireplace anchors the living room, where Tonya Sampson Nicholson used furniture from Costa Mesa's HtgT Furniture to dress up the space; the stylish Sampson Nicholson.



Clockwise from left: Amanda Burke of Amanda Burke Designs used three handblended custom paint colors, thinners and dryers to create the ombre effect on the bedroom wall; Parasoleil made the home's custom screen; Hydro Systems created the Picasso soaker tub in the bathroom; the koi pond and plant wall took about one week to design.



much of the home. "I fell in love with the homes wrapped in metal screens in Europe," she says. "For me, it's an amazing way to [create] a space that feels organic and glamorous and artistic at the same time. Had I just done a stucco box, it would not have had the same ambiance." Nor would residents get the daily shadow dance of sunlight cutting through the shapes into the home.

Once inside the 3,311-square-foot structure, unexpected elements continue: There are the shagreen-sheathed kitchen cabinets sourced from Deco Home in Los Angeles, the proliferation of tropical plants on vertical surfaces climbing on WallyGro fabric systems, and out-of-the-box concepts like the glass-walled wine cellar located under the main staircase. Sampson

Nicholson custom-designed the racks and even included a WhisperKool refrigeration system to ensure the area is as functional as it is visually stimulating.

In the living room, she designed a custom sofa and paired it with furnishings from Costa Mesa's HtgT Furniture. Above, a curved LED-lit ceiling contrasts the right-angled ribbon of a koi pond. "I [did] many pools and spas in production homes earlier in my career in California and Hawaii, but aside from my own home, this is the only time I've created a koi pond," she says, adding that her daughters, aged 10 and 13, dubbed the residence "The Koi Pond House."

Teasing the outdoor spaces beyond the first floor, she included large decks with all but one of the four bedrooms on the second story. On the third floor, a sprawling rooftop deck includes a second kitchen area and television.

Just as important as the design elements, however, is the capacity of the home to function as a place for gathering. "Being from the South, you entertain in your home. That can be a foreign concept for people in SoCal, where space is expensive and often limited," says the designer. "With this home's indoor-outdoor space, you could easily [host] 50 people and not blink. We live in such a hectic, technical age that gatherings become more and more valuable every day." Let the celebration begin. ■

