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# Deft Touch

Thanks to a subtle remodel, a formerly Tuscan-style Irvine abode gets a fresh new look.

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Interior Design: Barclay Butera, Barclay Butera Interiors Home Builder: Scott Nicholson, STN Builders, Inc.





Interior designer Barclay Butera improved the indoor-outdoor flow of a remodeled home in Irvine with new French doors from Sierra Pacific Windows leading from the living area to the rear terrace. The stone fountain was relocated from the side yard so that the sound of water could be heard from inside.

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ven with numerous home projects, three showrooms, five books and a host of licensing agreements for everything from lighting to furniture to carpets under his belt, Barclay Butera's enthusiasm is still palpable as he points out the favorite features in a recent

remodel for an Irvine couple. "Look at the black-framed windows and doors, the crisp white walls, the nailhead detailing on the sofa, the simple chandelier," he urges. "Everything is very clean. It's fresh. No fuss."

After a lifetime spent in the design business, Butera continues to change it up, refining his approach to creating beautiful, livable spaces for his clients. "In the beginning of my career, blue and white was my palette," he says. "They called me the 'Blue Boy,' and I'll still bring in blues." For this house, however, with the exception of the gray-blues in the family room, neutrals reigned, and that suited the wife, who describes herself as "not a color person," just fine.

Built in 2005, the home was originally done in a decidedly Tuscan style, and there were marble floors throughout. "It had a lot of Venetian plaster in a kind of golden hue," the wife recalls. "After 15 years, I was just so over it." One day, she walked into Butera's Newport Beach showroom scouting furniture ideas for her living-dining room. Before long, she realized the whole house was overdue for an update.

Butera and his team began by tweaking the shell of the house—raising the height of the arched doorways to open up the rooms and replacing all the windows and doors with black-framed openings. "It was a big surprise what an amazing change lifting the arches made," says the wife. "It made everything seem bigger."

Downstairs, under the direction of general contractor Scott Nicholson, the marble floors were swapped with Moroccan limestone, while upstairs, hardwood was put down in place of carpet. In keeping with the theme of simplicity, Butera selected a single slab of stone for the kitchen backsplash rather than tile. "The finishes aren't fighting with one another," he notes.

With the background set, the interior designer got to work integrating the artwork and Asian

antiques the clients had collected over the years with transitional pieces—some new, others that they'd had previously. The rectangular living and dining room—the room the wife initially wanted to redo—is now a study in elegantly understated contrasts, with one long wall accented by a textured wallpaper in beige-brown tones that contrasts with the white walls and ceiling. "People ask me, 'Is wallpaper in?'" says Butera. "And I say, 'Wallpaper was never out in my book! It's just the way I was brought up—wallpaper in every room. But using it as an accent makes a statement.'"

Bringing balance to the space is a pair of sculptural bronze and mahogany chandeliers—one over the dining table and the other over the living area. "I'm all about symmetry," says Butera. In the living area, he paired tufted klismos-inspired lounge chairs with a sofa studded with nailheads. "Everything is very subtle," Butera adds. "Instead of using fabrics with a pattern, it's more about texture."

The upstairs landing also got a major makeover, with a new custom railing and cabinetry accented with French hardware and mirrored doors trimmed in a chinoiserie design. "Again, there's that attention to detail," says Butera. "But you'll see there's no crown molding. It's very clean."

Outside, Butera's team worked with landscape installer Ramiro Rodriguez of Luxe Environment to bring consistency to the mature plants and trees and to move the existing stone fountain from the side yard to the rear of the house. Asian sculptures join an outdoor dining table and chairs, and on the terrace, lounge chairs make for cozy gatherings around a fireplace on cool evenings.

Surveying the completed house, Butera pronounces it "timeless," adding, "This will not look dated 20 years from now. Three years ago, I redid my Newport Beach house. I wanted it to be more of a peaceful retreat. It's about living with less, but the things that we do put in a home are very special. Everything has a story."

The couple say they couldn't be happier that they took the plunge and decided to redo the whole house. Says the wife with a laugh, "When I look back, I think, 'Why did I only want to do one room?'" ■

“You’ll see houses where every room is a different color. This house is white, except for the accent walls.”

—BARCLAY BUTERA



Butera furnished the living area with an Alfonso Marina sofa and Athens tufted lounge chairs from The Thomas Pheasant Collection for Baker. An encaustic work by Sylvia Torres hangs on a wall accented by KMD wallpaper. The interior designer chose a coffee table from his eponymous collection to anchor the space. For lighting, he opted for a chandelier and sconces also by Pheasant for Baker and Visual Comfort floor lamps.



**Above:** A Theodore Alexander desk is paired with a Hooker Furniture chair in the husband's office, where Butera alternated a moody Phillip Jeffries wallcovering with paneling. The shelving holds antique books and objects.

**Opposite:** In the breakfast area, Thomas Pheasant's Swag lantern for Baker hangs above a Kreiss table and chairs the clients already owned. The custom built-in cabinet features steel doors whose color echoes the new windows and doors throughout. Underfoot are limestone floors from Exquisite Surfaces.



**Right:** The seating on the terrace looking out to the view includes a pair of Century chairs and ottomans. "We work on houses from the front to the back, so you'll see our stamp in the backyard as well as inside," Butera says. "Everything has to be congruent."

**Opposite:** Olive trees flank the outdoor fireplace, before which Butera set lounge chairs and an occasional table by Century. Landscape installer Ramiro Rodriguez of Luxe Environment refreshed the existing landscaping.

