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# character building

Interior designer Michael Lee turned a dark California bachelor pad into a welcoming, airy retreat.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICK SPRINGETT

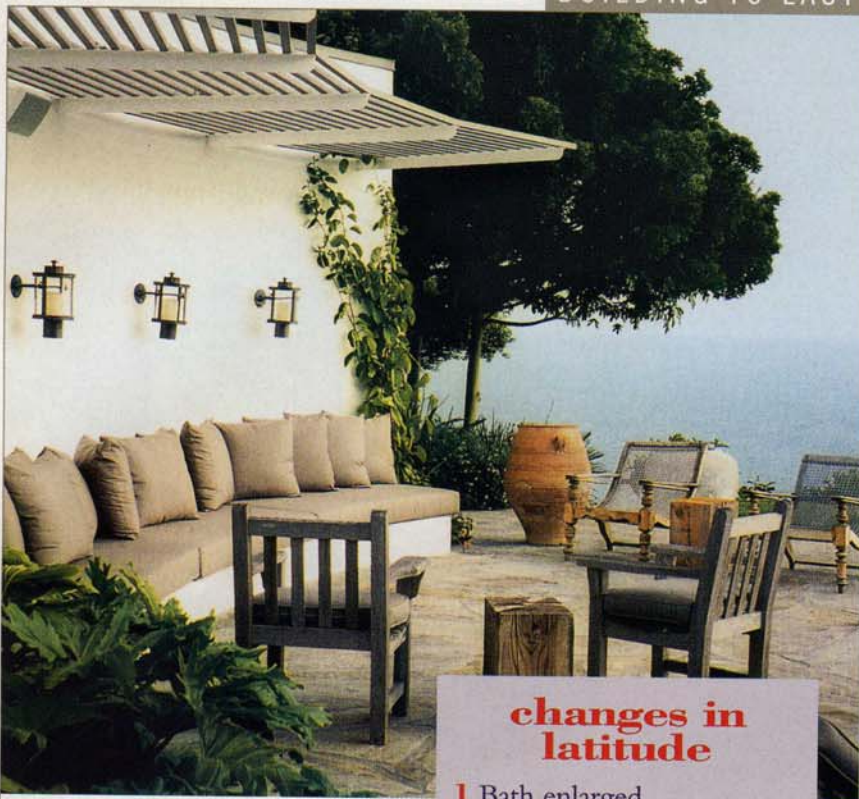
The site was stellar; the house wasn't. With low ceilings, shag carpet, and an awkward addition, this Malibu home was stuck in the 1960s. But that didn't deter interior designer Michael Lee. Visualizing the possibilities, he bought it and began planning a restoration project that would take two years to complete.

His first step was to evaluate the layout. "The guy did position the house perfectly," says Michael, complimenting the good sense of the original owner.

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From this view, exterior changes were subtle. A standing-seam metal roof replaced shingles, and double-glazed sliding glass doors updated old floor-to-ceiling windows and sliding glass doors.



An existing curved wall provides a graceful backdrop for this flagstone terrace, which replaced a brick one. Above the built-in concrete bench, strips of redwood supported by cantilevered steel I-beams form an arbor.

“The living room faces right down the coastline. At night, the city lights are amazing.”

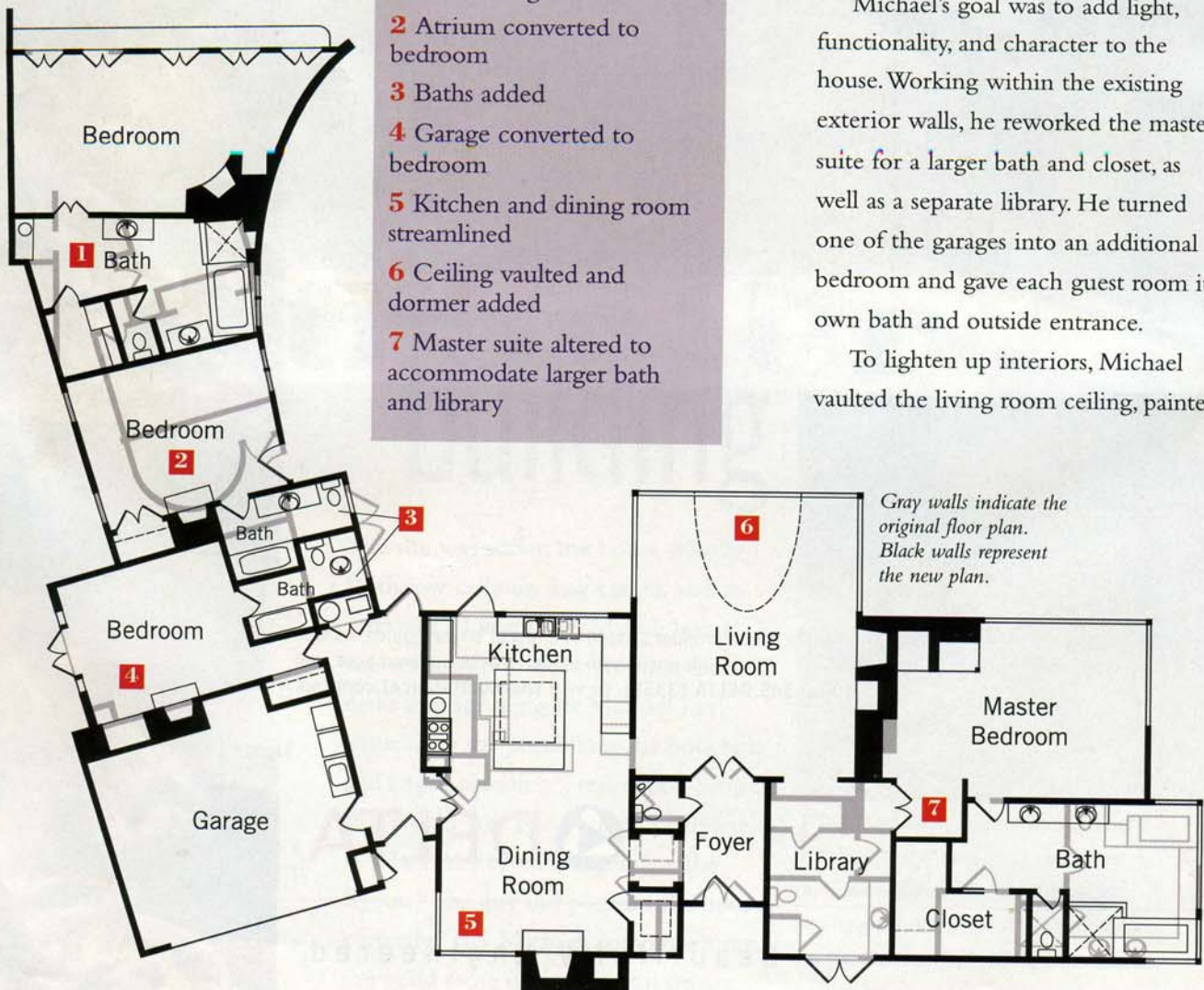
For Michael, though, the views from the bluff weren't enough. He wanted a home that was as aesthetically pleasing as its site. Originally built as a one-bedroom bachelor pad, the home later gained two more bedrooms and two garages. Inside, “there were no moldings, no sense of style,” he says. “It was a drywall box.”

Michael's goal was to add light, functionality, and character to the house. Working within the existing exterior walls, he reworked the master suite for a larger bath and closet, as well as a separate library. He turned one of the garages into an additional bedroom and gave each guest room its own bath and outside entrance.

To lighten up interiors, Michael vaulted the living room ceiling, painted

### changes in latitude

- 1 Bath enlarged
- 2 Atrium converted to bedroom
- 3 Baths added
- 4 Garage converted to bedroom
- 5 Kitchen and dining room streamlined
- 6 Ceiling vaulted and dormer added
- 7 Master suite altered to accommodate larger bath and library





most surfaces a crisp white, and added skylights and windows. He replaced floor-to-ceiling plate-glass windows and sliding glass doors in the living room and master bedroom with a series of double-glazed sliding glass doors that stack. This allows the rooms to open wide to the terrace and lawn.

Perhaps most importantly, he worked to establish a sense of history for the home. "I tried to make the house more traditional," Michael says. The addition of a shapely eyebrow dormer, which he had seen on early California bungalows, visually breaks up the low roofline. A 1920s French-style house in Dallas supplied the unusual wrought iron awning

To brighten the living room, the designer vaulted the ceiling and introduced an eyebrow dormer. Above: Other added architectural details include salvaged ironwork from a 1920s French-style house in Texas. The awning adds charm and interest to one of the new guest bedroom entrances.



- Additional Photos that were not in the article -





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