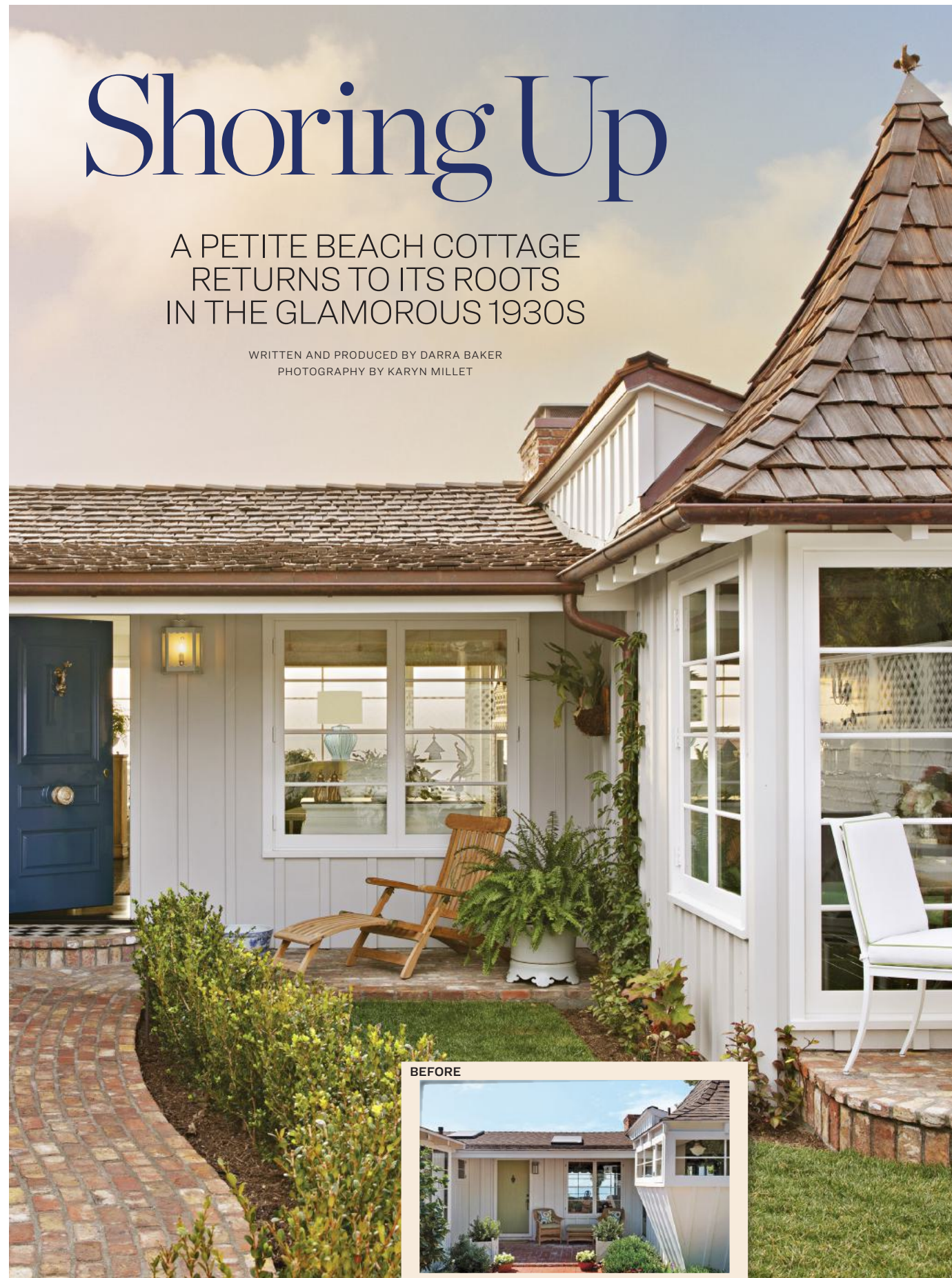


# Shoring Up

A PETITE BEACH COTTAGE  
RETURNS TO ITS ROOTS  
IN THE GLAMOROUS 1930S

WRITTEN AND PRODUCED BY DARRA BAKER  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KARYN MILLET







**R**enovating—or, in Laura Pavlovich’s case, transforming—a weathered and timeworn 1936 beach shanty into a gleaming dream cottage required both the vision of an artist and the heart of a poet: the vision to see beyond its cracks and sags straight to the ocean and the space’s design possibilities; the heart to keep its soul, spirit, and even its 875-square-foot footprint while bringing in maximum light.

Both the vision and the heart grew out of Pavlovich’s enchantment with the cottage, perched high on the bluffs of Three Arch Bay in Laguna Beach, California. It was love at first sight.

“When I was looking for a home, I knew I wanted to be by the water,” the designer says. “When I opened the little door, I just saw water. I walked through the door and immediately felt at home. I felt the embrace of the place and the ocean. I saw past the single-wall construction, the exposed electrical, all the cracks, and just knew I was home.”

After purchasing the house, Pavlovich’s vision was the opposite of the norm for owners of small old houses on ocean-facing property in Southern California. Rather than demolishing it or expanding to within inches of the lot size, Pavlovich kept the original footprint of the house, which also preserved



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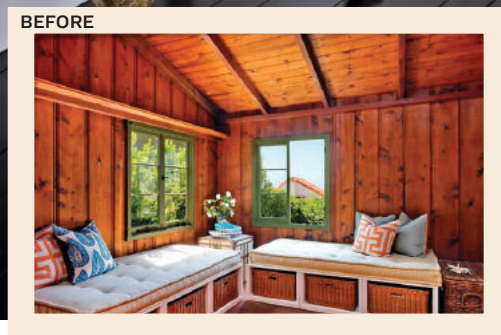
—designer and homeowner  
Laura Pavlovich

**Vignettes** Homeowner and designer Laura Pavlovich found the knocker at a thrift shop for \$35, had it silver-plated, and set it above the lavish Sherle Wagner center knob. A functioning old telephone sits on a custom bird’s-eye maple shelf Pavlovich dreamed up specifically for the tiny breakfast area. The deck welcomes guests to sit on vintage steel Maison Jansen chairs with fun gooseneck backs. Below the canopy-style ceiling in the breakfast area, 1950s Ico Parisi chairs surround a bistro table Pavlovich made from a 1970s Gabriella Crispi desk base. The cottage’s hardware is all silver-plated—it doesn’t tarnish with handling. The hidden bar is lacquered in “British Racing Green” by Ralph Lauren. **Previous pages** The swooping roof atop the breakfast area was inspired by the garden folly at Hidcote Manor Garden in England. A playful plaster of Paris lantern by Oriel Harwood crowns the living room. A peekaboo door connects to the kitchen.





“I WANTED THIS HOUSE TO LIVE LARGE.”  
— Laura Pavlovich



**Dining room** A generously scaled piece that Pavlovich (*top*) had fashioned from Ananbô French wallpaper panels sets a dreamy mood. She chose the scene specifically for its hazy, geographical ambiguity. A row of old Japanese fishing floats belonged to Pavlovich's grandmother. "She would have them floating in her outdoor bathtub in Carmel," the designer says. The painted wood chairs are by Niermann Weeks.





the charming, salty-air outdoor spaces. “I see too many houses being stripped of their soul and integrity,” Pavlovich says.

Drawing inspiration from the home’s 1930s pedigree, she set out to shore up its structural integrity and bring back the elegance of a golden era in Southern California history. “I wanted this house to live large,” says Pavlovich, who is an admirer of renowned architects of that period such as Paul Williams, George Washington Smith, and Wallace Neff.

Every surface and system was updated, except for the original floor and fireplace. “I was told the fireplace was holding the house up and not to do anything to it,” she says with a laugh. Throughout the cottage, Pavlovich removed the dark, knotty pine-covered single-wall construction and replaced it with matte white wood-clad walls that house proper insulation, updated electrical, and hidden storage—including a secret green-lacquered bar reminiscent of a speakeasy.

In addition to drawing inspiration from the origins of the property and from the ocean below, Pavlovich looked to a painting that once hung in her grandmother’s Carmel-by-the-

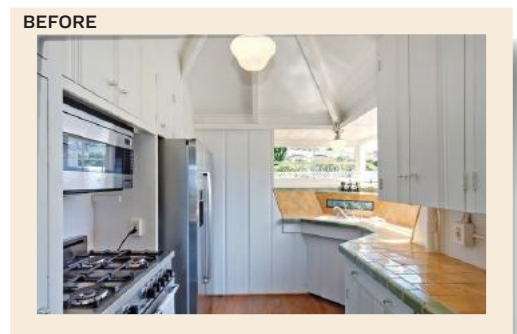
**Vignettes** An inches-deep cabinet stores knives. A pass-through from the kitchen to the living room is just large enough for a tray of cocktails. Cast-silver animal accents make functional items feel festive. The bear finials at the center of the kitchen cabinetry were hand-carved by local artisans, modeled after cute bear sculptures Pavlovich and her son found near the Duomo in Florence. A custom serving table with attractive legs sits opposite a Lacanche range Pavlovich favors for its size and functionality. A German sink adds another intriguing curve.



Sea cottage. The 1950s watercolor from Japan provided the renovated cottage’s palette. Pavlovich’s own travels offered additional guiding light. In Europe, she picked up a penchant for using one-of-a-kind antiques, reclaimed Belgian brick and French marble, and for silver-plating detailed hardware that keeps its sheen thanks to frequent use.

To maximize the ocean’s soothing influence inside the cottage, Pavlovich replicated and expanded the 1930s horizontally mullioned, crank-open windows that face the sea. Now breezes and the ocean’s infinite shades of blues sweep through the interiors. The sea and sky blues are amplified by the newly painted white walls, a huge upgrade from dark pine.

Rooms also switched places in order to maximize sea views and morning sun: The formerly street-side kitchen now faces





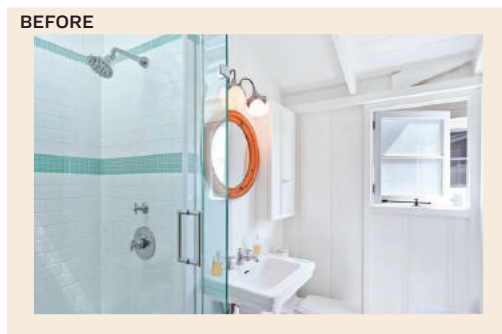


the sea—a huge game-changer. “If you’re going to do dishes, you might as well see the water, fling the windows open, and hear the waves,” Pavlovich says. And in the kitchen’s old spot now sits a sun-warmed breakfast area, thanks to her younger son’s insistence.

Her other children, grown and in creative fields, also influenced the design. Pavlovich’s daughter, her design partner at Therese Carmel Bespoke Interiors, found the pièce de résistance of the cottage: an ancient Irish fireplace mantel. Her older son, who makes bespoke men’s suits, designed the dashing green bar and the black-and-white stone pattern adorning floors at the cottage’s entrance and in the reworked bath.

In the end, the lightened, brightened elegant cottage is all about the family staying close together yet living large. 🏡

Designer: Laura Pavlovich



“I SEE TOO MANY HOUSES BEING STRIPPED OF THEIR SOUL AND INTEGRITY.”  
—Laura Pavlovich

**Bedroom** Cowtan & Tout “La Pagode Chine” chinoiserie fabric brings in a splash of fun color. **Vignettes** Reclaimed marble from a convent in France lines the floor of the reimagined bathroom. A custom table from Jamb fits the bathroom sink. A cubby opens to reveal shoe storage.

BEFORE PHOTOS: ANDREW BRAMASCO PHOTOGRAPHY