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A New Face for Coastal Living

With the breathtaking coastal view firmly in mind, KTG Y Group Inc. and the Duane Fitzgerald Corporation join creative forces to produce an award-winning "upside-down" dream home along the Southern California coastline.

By Kimberly Starn

With more than three decades of experience specializing in high-end custom homebuilding along the Pacific, Duane Fitzgerald, owner of the Duane Fitzgerald Corp., found himself in possession of a prime parcel of land in the coastal town of Dana Point, Calif., with free reign as to its development. Having worked together numerous times in the past, Fitzgerald turned to Rob Williams, AIA, of the Irvine, Calif.-based KTG Y Group Inc., and offered him an architect's dream: a large degree of creative control on the project.

RIGHT: A sight for sore eyes in its own right, this Dana Point home takes full advantage of the ocean view. Photo by Eric Figge Photography.





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From start to spectacular finish

Crediting the unusual design to the property's layout, Williams set about designing a home that would make the most of the ocean view and fashioning what may best be described as an "upside-down" home design. The lower level of the 3,450-square-foot home contains a three-car garage with an entryway leading back to the master bedroom and bath, along with a family entertainment room and patio — all overlooking the coastline. The main living areas, such as the living room, kitchen, breakfast nook, dining room and deck, are on the upper level, with two additional bedrooms located on the front street-facing side of the house.

RIGHT: Use of patios and decks make the most of the outdoors.

FAR RIGHT:

Extensive windows let ocean views enhance the interior space.

BELOW: Clean lines create an elegant geometry, from the stair railings and windows to the hardwood flooring and furniture.

Photos by Eric Figge Photography.



Williams set about designing a home that





would make the most of the ocean view.

With this unique set of blueprints in hand, Fitzgerald and his crew began constructing this very contemporary spec home. Due to the extensive building occurring in the area at the time, framing contractors were in short supply, so Fitzgerald and his son-in-law rolled up their sleeves and did the job themselves. With framing complete, the house's shell was extremely eye-catching.

The finished product is a stunning flat-roofed house with clean, uncluttered lines that sits upon the highest corner of Dana Point, overlooking both the city and the coastline. Bull-nosed, soft-surface stucco, hard-edged stone and mahogany garage and entry doors meld into a complementary balance of contrasts along the exterior. Reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright's infamous style, mitered floor-to-ceiling windows were used extensively — including in corners — to capture the surrounding views. Patio landscaping and a fountain assist in further blurring the line between the interior and the outdoors. The landscape and hardscape also work together, with landscaped areas appearing as individual modules throughout the hardscape.

An inspired interior

Granite for the counters and fireplace was cut from a single piece, allowing the grain to run consistently through each area. Sticking

with the contemporary style befitting the home, bar rails were used to line the stairs. The Brazilian cherry floors further complement the area and became one of Fitzgerald's favorite aspects of the interior. Taking sound systems a step beyond the norm, a system was installed with touch pads throughout the house, enabling listeners in each room to select their own audio source and allowing different music to play in every room.

The master bedroom is a romantic hideaway tucked behind a double-door entry, with a patio and two-way fireplace that sets its glow not only upon the bedroom but also upon the two-person Jacuzzi tub in the master bath. An attached second room was designed for use as a sitting area, additional bedroom, nursery or entertainment room and is separated by a door for additional privacy.

"This home just flows," Fitzgerald says. Each phase moved smoothly into the next, all the way through to the search for lighting and the perfect chandelier.

Recognition for a rewarding project

It is likely that both men will favorably remember the project throughout their careers. Williams, who thrives on using his creativity to design architectural plans that perfectly meet owners' needs, has



"This home just flows," Fitzgerald says.



TOP: Ceiling-to-floor windows add to the floor plan's open feel while angular dividing walls create a sense of space.

ABOVE: Whole-home audio maximizes the home's entertainment possibilities. Photos by Eric Figge Photography.

his own imagination to appease this time around. For Fitzgerald, this project provided the first opportunity for him and his children to work on a spec home together.

The home has been garnering attention from all who see it. Neighbors observe that the eye-catching design has increased the value of the community as a whole. Fitzgerald and Williams agree that it was the uncommon design that set their home apart, earning it a coveted Merit Award for best custom home under 5,000 square feet at the 2006 Gold Nugget Awards.


The joint endeavor caught the attention of one of the harshest of all architectural critics — another architect. Instead of criticizing the ideas of a rival architect, his experienced eye saw the home as the showplace of originality that it is. As the home's current owners, he and his wife have made a special effort to furnish and decorate it in a manner befitting its exceptional design.

For Fitzgerald, "The [best] part of this job is being involved in the creative process, being able to stand back at the end and say, 'I was part of that.'" From beginning to end, Fitzgerald and Williams were indeed a part of creating something new and unique in Dana Point.

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