



BUFFER ZONE

The music room stands between the much-used family room and the corner of the property that is most exposed to people passing by the home on the canal or the pedestrian pathway (opposite).



BRIAN THOMAS JONES

THE ARCHITECTURE OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S BALBOA ISLAND evokes that of Nantucket and other East Coast islands. Like the Atlantic's weathered, shingled cottages, the 1920s wooden bungalows of this small vacation community just off the Newport Beach mainland display an abundance of character and convey a sense of warmth.

Against this backdrop, on a prominent point overlooking Newport Harbor, an incongruous single-story slab of glass, steel, and concrete was erected in the 1950s. "It was the worst of the old Palm Springs look," says Bob Olson, the owner of the property on which that structure once stood. "It was physically cold, unattractive, with windows that hadn't been opened in 20 years."

When Olson and his wife, Christine, acquired the house in 2004, they knew that it suited neither their lifestyle nor the island's character, so they had the building demolished and commissioned architect Robert Sinclair, of Sinclair Associates Architects in Los Angeles, to design a new residence. They wanted their home, which ultimately would cover 5,300 square feet, to blend with its surroundings and look as though it had been built in the same era as the other homes on the island.