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great whites

Staying true to one color doesn't mean playing it safe. A Southern



California house takes on this neutral shade with style



The living room in Tami Topol's Laguna Beach home is a mix of upholstered pieces (a custom sofa from Skout) and natural elements (leather chairs from Roost, a Classic Concepts, Inc., jute rug) for a neutral scheme that's far from boring.

WRITER **HOLLY H. GOFF** PHOTOGRAPHER **LISA ROMEREIN** STYLIST **CHAR HATCH LANGOS**



White can be the ultimate blank slate. It's the starting point, a place to splash color and pattern.



But to Tami Topol, a real estate developer who works from her Laguna Beach, California, home, white is the goal—an essential ingredient for a relaxing house and the perfect backdrop for her stunning surroundings. When Tami first saw the ocean from her home, she christened the place immediately. “I absolutely couldn’t believe the view from the front deck,” she says. “The reflections, the sparkle, and the shimmer on the water—it was Shimmer House.”

To transform the once-lackluster interiors while also taking advantage of those spectacular views, Tami partnered with Newport Beach-based designer Erin Curci on a six-month renovation. First, the cramped and boxy floor plan needed to be reconfigured to maximize the home’s hilltop Pacific Ocean vistas. Knocking down a few walls created one large cooking, dining, and living space oriented toward the ribbon of picture windows overlooking the beach. The new, open plan makes the main level’s 1,400 square feet feel extra spacious. After that, the decorating could begin. Erin and Tami decided on a palette of white and white—plus more white. “We both love a crisp and clean look,” Erin says. “Tami’s lifestyle, and this setting, perfectly positioned us to do it right. So we started with an all-white backdrop and added beach-chic, organic, natural materials.”

Throughout the house, reclaimed white-oak floors create a seamless transition between the open spaces, aided by the same creamy white paint on every surface.

Opposite: Ebonized root stools from RJ Imports mimic the lines of the tree trunks beyond the den’s picture windows. The lush vegetation outside is a vibrant backdrop for the room’s serene white palette. **Above:** Antique etchings on the dining room wall add graphic interest. **Left:** Homeowner Tami Topol and designer Erin Curci (in scarf)





The Right White

Designer Erin Curci's paint picks for a white palette

Dunn-Edwards

Milk Glass (DEW358)

This cool white is Erin's favorite; it's on most of the walls in Shimmer House.

Dunn-Edwards

White Heat (DEW338)

A good warm white for small spaces, like a guest bath

Benjamin Moore

Cloud White (967)

and Sea Pearl (961)

Soft and clean—ideal on ceilings

Farrow & Ball

Wimborne White (239)

and James White (2010)

These creamy shades give depth to walls.

Dunn-Edwards

White (DEW380)

A great bright white, perfect for a crisp trim



With so many large windows and such picturesque scenery, Erin hung very few pieces of art, aside from a series of etchings in the dining area and an occasional photograph. Instead, she enlivened the walls with texture: Carrera marble tile in the kitchen, planked wood paneling in the guest suite, and a stucco fireplace surround in the living room.

In keeping with the clean, modern look Tami wanted, Erin chose streamlined seating upholstered in linen or white cotton textiles. To that neutral backdrop she added a layer of natural elements—jute rugs, salvaged-wood accessories, leather pieces. “In the absence of color, you create depth and mood through the use of texture and a variety of materials,” the designer says. Occasional glass and metal items, such as the dining room’s teardrop chandelier and zinc-topped table or the kidney-shaped coffee table in the living room, add a hint of glint; pops of green from the potted plants and large glass jugs are all the color the house needs. All in all, it’s the perfect mix of sleek and organic—and proof that white does not have to equal bland.

In the bedrooms, as with the rest of the house, Erin channeled spa-style restfulness for a look that’s simple and uncluttered but never dull or austere. The guest room has soft touches, such as organic cotton bed linens and a gauzy canopy, while the master bedroom sets

Above: Erin stocked the open shelves outside the kitchen with flea market finds. Right: The front deck’s L-shaped bench is deep enough for napping. Opposite: The kitchen’s gray tones—in the limestone countertops, marble backsplash, and stainless steel appliances—are a cool contrast to the warm, woven textures in the adjacent dining area.





a similarly tranquil mood with a custom sheepskin rug, sheer curtains, and linen bedding. Best of all, the room opens to the back patio, from which Tami can hear the soothing fountain.

In fact, Tami lives alfresco as much as possible, thanks to Laguna Beach's mild climate and the fact that her home has nearly as much space outdoors as in. The front deck includes plenty of comfy, ocean-view vantage points, including a dining space and a lounge area with an L-shaped built-in bench. But it's the back patio that is Tami's favorite spot for entertaining. "Friends come and don't want to leave," she says. The outdoor space mirrors the rooms inside, with stark white walls, a stone floor, wooden furnishings, and textural plantings that are a meeting of modern and natural. "I often hear people say that they never sit outside, and I can usually tell why," says landscape designer Molly Wood. "Here, I looked at the pattern, style, contrast, and texture inside the home and translated those aesthetics to the outdoors. This is a small house with a huge presence, and I wanted to carry that presence through to the landscape."

Now, Tami's all-white, light-filled retreat feels like a Southern California beach fantasy. "I live my vacation every day," she says. "The doors stay open, and I watch the ocean all day long, then go on beach walks at dusk and watch the sun set over the water. It's all about that shimmer." 🌿 Sources: page 110

Above: Organic linens from Matteo cover the sleek platform bed in the master bedroom. Light streams in through large windows and a door that opens to the back patio (left), where plush cushions, nickel lanterns, and a cozy fireplace embody three of landscape designer Molly Wood's outdoor space essentials: comfort, light, and warmth.

The all-women team of (from left) residential designer Kathleen DiPaolo, landscape designer Molly Wood, Tami, and Erin gather on the patio for wine and cheese.

