

SCANDINAVIAN DESIGN / PACIFIC COAST RESORTS / CREATIVE WINE CELLARS

OCEAN HOME™

The Luxury Coastal Lifestyle Magazine
AUGUST + SEPTEMBER 2020

CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'

ON THE COVER
Landscape designer
Scott Shrader works
with the natural
beauty of Rincon Point
to create a serene
outdoor living space.

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MODERN IN MALIBU
SOUTH AFRICAN INSPIRED
AND
CARMEL DESIGN REIMAGINED



lifestyle

ULTRALUXE IN MALIBU.
GUEST ROOMS, WINE CELLARS

AUG
+
SEPT
2020

24

DRIVING FORCE

WITH HIS OWN SPIN, A FORMER STUNTMAN AND DESIGN VISIONARY BRINGS NEW MEANING TO LUXURY OCEANFRONT LIVING IN MALIBU.

BY JENNIE NUNN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIM BARTSCH



AUG
+
SEPT
2020

25

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■ MALIBU

In high school, Scott Gillen, founder of Malibu-based bespoke design build company UnvarnishedCo and brokerage firm Unvarnished, logged countless hours in the garage of his Sherman Oaks home. “I used to cut school all the time and go racing on Mulholland Boulevard and cruise with all my friends and we would race on weekends, and I built cars in my garage,” recalls Gillen, who constructed a dune buggy from scratch by the time he was 15 with an engine he found at a junkyard. “Looking back on it at the time, it was more of an aesthetic thing I was trying to do, and dune buggies were cool at the time. I didn’t know much about mechanical aspects, so I’m kind of a self-taught guy, but I took things apart and put them back together and I figured it out as I went. I never really had any formal training, but I’m able to see things, visualize them, and just execute them. I’m not sure how, but I’m very fortunate like that.”

From there, Gillen, built his second car, a Volkswagen Beetle (or “Bug”), followed by a 1965 Mustang, and a 1967 Camaro, and left home at 16-and-a-half to go live with friends. After a series of fortuitous events and a Hollywood connection from his friend, Gillen fell into script writing and landed the career of a lifetime as a stuntman for *The Dukes of Hazzard*, and later worked on *Hooper*, *The Blues Brothers*, and *The Fall Guy*, becoming the youngest stunt driver in television. “We did stuff that would blow people’s mind, and we took every risk you could take,” explains Gillen, who spent nearly five years jumping cars from upper roads to lower roads, doing parachute tricks, and motorcycle stunts. “It’s all about doing bigger, better, faster than the last guy. It was a blast.” After retiring due to an injury, Gillen opened his own truck rental facility supplying trucks for the commercial business, and then worked behind the camera as a director for automotive commercials for seven-and-a-half years.

But, Gillen, who admittedly thrives under pressure, fatefully stumbled into design 16 years ago after meeting his wife, Teri, and transforming their 1928 bungalow in Venice into a live/work space with an all-glass garage and exposed beams. When they ultimately decided to move to Malibu (his wife was expecting with their daughter, Sofia, at the time), the house sold within one hour. He not



Former stunt driver Scott Gillen has made a new career in the luxury home market.



only found his new professional path, but he knew he was onto something.

Enter UnvarnishedCo, a collection of timeless and architecturally significant residences in Malibu including the Malibu Series portfolio with landmark estate The New Castle; a quartet of homes in The Who Collection; Paradise Cove; Serra Retreat; Malibu Road; Cliffside;

Carbon Canyon; and The Case, an enclave of five houses poised on 24 acres. “The definition of Unvarnished is raw and unfiltered, it is what it is, and I don’t use shiny goods, I use matte finishes,” explains Gillen, who has amassed a total of 25 residences with eight more currently in the works. “I try to build seamless things and I don’t want something to stand out. You shouldn’t walk into the house and say, ‘wow, look at that!’ you should walk into the house and think ‘this is amazing,’ and you shouldn’t know why it’s amazing. I love to ask people, ‘what do you love about it?’ and they’ll look at me and go, ‘you know I don’t know exactly, but I like the vibe,’ and they can’t pinpoint it, so when someone says that, I’ve done my job. It’s a home run for me. If something stands out, it’s a complete miss.”

The New Castle, a 15,500-square-foot home with an unobstructed, 120-foot-long

AUG
+
SEPT
2020

26



glass enclosed great room overlooking the Pacific Ocean is definitely one of these conversation starters. Throughout the seven-bedroom, 10-bath home—with a solid teak 450-bottle wine cellar; hand-scraped aged White Oak floors; a Bulthaup kitchen equipped with Miele, Sub-Zero, and Gaggenau appliances; and a hand-crafted staircase constructed from a single piece of teak that took a little more than a year to build—Gillen deliberately calculated every single detail down to the strategic placement of furniture and ergonomics and how the body moves and turns through the space. “When you come through the front door, I’m not a big fan of giving the whole thing up in one big hit,” says Gillen. “I wanted to disguise the ocean [and it’s a massive ocean view], so I built the teak and glass wine cellar and bordering cigar room. There’s so many layers of depth because if you walk through the front door and you see the view right out of the gate, the whole ‘wow’ is over, and it’s

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Gillen’s thoughtful design took into the flow of space as well as ergonomics. Below, Scott Gillen



‘now what?’ or, ‘what are you going to show me that’s better than that?’ and it goes back to directing and there’s a story to be told. I like to have it unfold in a certain way.”

For Gillen, telling a story through design



is only a small part of what he values most about his work. “I get to look back, and say ‘I built that,’ or ‘I did that,’ and I love creating things, and I love looking back on something and knowing that I did it,” says Gillen. “I’m not a fan of self-promotion, but I do really enjoy getting feedback from people telling me that they look at what I do and are inspired. And, I really love handing down. That’s huge to me.” ♦