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Left: A view of the Pacific from Annette and Stan Cook's Malibu house, which was designed by Vicente Wolf. On the cover: George Stephanopoulos and Alexandra Wentworth's living room in Washington, D.C. "Capital Idea," page 106. Photography by Simon Upton; styled by Anita Sarsidi.

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Facing page: Annette and Stan Cook with their sons (from left) Chase, Grayson, and Preston, at their Malibu, California, home, which was designed by Vicente Wolf; the limestone-walled terrace overlooks the Pacific. This page: In the living room, Wolf designed the Melhado sofa, framed mirrors, and Bridgewater chair; the 1950s French club chairs from VW Home are upholstered in a Bergamo linen; the cocktail table is by Wolf for Ralph Pucci International; the circa-1900 Tabriz carpet is from Doris Leslie Blau; and the curtains are made of a Kravet fabric. See Resources.



# NORTHERN LIGHT

FOR A CALIFORNIA CLIENT WITH A PASSION FOR SWEDISH STYLE, DESIGNER VICENTE WOLF PROVIDES A MODERN RHAPSODY IN BLUE AND GRAY

*Text by Anne Bogart · Photography by Vicente Wolf  
Styled by Stephen Pappas*





Clockwise from top: The kitchen cabinetry and hood were designed by Vicente Wolf, and the wicker dining chairs are from Bielecky Brothers. In the foyer, Indian marble bottles from VW Home are displayed on an industrial table from France; the rope handrail is a Wolf design. Landscaped steps outside the master bedroom. Facing page, from left: The dining room features an oak-and-brass table, wingback banquettes, and mohair-covered chairs, all by Wolf; the Vendôme sconces are from Bourgeois Bohème Atelier, and the curtains are made of a Kravet fabric. Wolf's curved sofa and Jane chairs in the family room are upholstered with fabrics from VW Home; the tufted ottoman cocktail table is by Wolf, and the patchwork rug is custom made of cowhide from Edelman Leather. See Resources.



**ANNETTE COOK** thought she had a clear idea of how she wanted to live—in what she calls a Swedish barn. Yet after nearly five years of permit bureaucracy and construction issues, the house she and her husband/business partner, Stan, built in Malibu, California, was nowhere close to that vision.

"I've got my own sense of style, of how I want things to be," says Cook, founder, CEO, and creative director of Barefoot Dreams, a company known for ultrasoft baby blankets and robes for adults. "I needed an editor to interpret what I was thinking. I wanted to take it to the next level, but I didn't know how." Interior designer Vicente Wolf, however, did. Though the Cuba-born, New York City-based tastemaker's work is scarcely Scandinavian—he gravitates more toward a spare mélange of ethnic art, 20th-century photography, Art Deco furniture, and strategically juxtaposed antiques—Cook found herself drawn to his low-key aesthetic and refined rooms. And he wasn't fazed by her Nordic daydream. "I just tried to understand what she truly meant by *Swedish barn*," Wolf says. "And as we talked, I realized Annette was really imagining colors, all those classic worn grays and blues."

Cook and her husband would ultimately get the home they desired, just not as they originally planned—and Wolf would do a lot more than merely furnish the 9,600-square-foot building. "We made an impact on the total environment," says the designer, who found the house he was presented with to be "a combination of contemporary, Swedish, and traditional. There was some confusion. We cleaned it up." For the exterior, he had the two lower floors of the

four-story stucco structure wrapped in slightly darker stone, a gesture that gives the pale architecture a sense of solidity and helps reduce its overwhelming scale. "The stone makes you look at the building horizontally, not vertically, like it's a two-story house with a foundation," the designer points out.

When the time came to begin furnishing the interiors, Wolf riffed on Cook's preferred gray-blue palette. He approached it, he says, "a little differently by using tone on tone, with some rooms being more gray, others more blue. Even the wood we used has a gray cast to it." The foggy, atmospheric color scheme also lends a sense of dreamlike mystery to the spaces. "We didn't want a house where the minute you walk in you know exactly what is going to be in the next room," Wolf says. "The Cooks appreciate the element of surprise."

To a backdrop of salvaged-oak beams, wide-plank floors, and gray curtains framing ocean views, Wolf brought in a carefully edited array of objects hailing from India, China, France, and midcentury America. It's a freewheeling assortment but restrained in attitude and materials, meshing perfectly with a lifestyle the designer calls "elegant but not stuffy." Since Annette likes to prepare meals while surrounded by friends and family, the designer created an open kitchen composed of teak and zinc; the 16-foot-long island is positioned beneath a skylight. He also incorporated into the space items the Cooks have collected over the years, from Swedish furniture to white china tableware to an oversize wood rosary.

The designer only cites one project mandate that gave him pause—the house had to hold up to



From top: Wolf designed the marble tub in the master bath as well as the shagreen-paneled wood vanities, tilting mirrors, and light fixtures; the tub filler is by Dornbracht. The guest room features a wrought-iron Campaign canopy bed from Charles P. Rogers Beds, Anichini linens, curtains made of Rogers & Goffigon wool, and a rug from Stark Carpet. Facing page: In the master bedroom, the stainless-steel bed, giltwood headboard, and ottoman bench, which is covered in Donghia wool, are by Wolf; the seagrass rug is from Stark Carpet. See Resources.

vigorous wear and tear. Cook, mother of three boys ages 11, 9, and 5, told him, "There will be 16 kids playing in the house at all times." Wolf says with a grin, "That was a major challenge—bringing in materials that have a sense of richness but that are still child-friendly." The results, his client observes, are a success. "The longer I live with what Vicente has done here, the more I appreciate it," marvels Cook. "Just look at what he used in the media room: vinyl to cover the walls, mohair for the seats, and sofas upholstered with leather. Believe me: We've put that room to the test with something like 10 boys in there watching movies all night. It still looks great, but it's also indestructible."

Wolf's own furniture designs are scattered throughout, from an artful table he produced for Ralph Pucci International to a custom living room suite upholstered in fabrics from his VW Home line. One of Cook's favorite pieces is the curvaceous 18th-century-inspired headboard mounted within the master bedroom's stark metal four-poster. That blending of sensuous old and streamlined new "represents the essence of what we were trying to do in the house," Wolf says. The soulfulness he achieved, though, required a great deal of thought. As the designer intended, the master bedroom's soft-blue-gray walls react to available light, going from smoky to pale depending on the time of day, and its taffeta curtains look simple but are tailored as precisely as a couture dress. "Vicente insisted we fly in a drapery guy from Manhattan to take the measurements," Cook notes. Excessive? Not at all, she says: "In the end, it's the attention to detail that has made all the difference." ■



