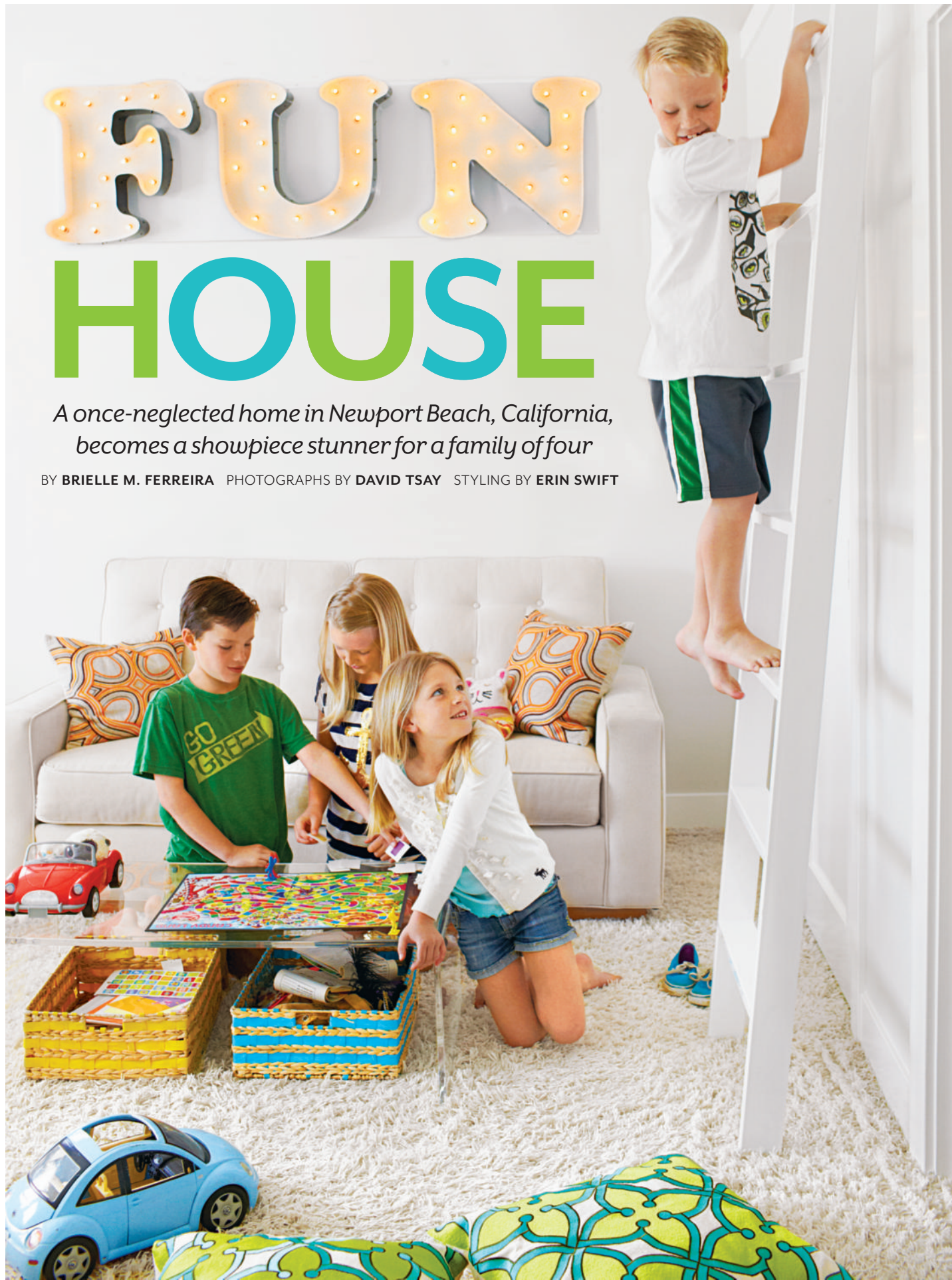


FUN HOUSE

A once-neglected home in Newport Beach, California, becomes a showpiece stunner for a family of four

BY BRIELLE M. FERREIRA PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID TSAY STYLING BY ERIN SWIFT



The table is from R.J. Imports; the banquette fabric is by Trina Turk for Schumacher. Opposite: The Lipkowski girls invite friends over to play in the glow of an illuminated vintage sign.





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BEAUTY IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER—at least it was for Jim and Tina Lipkowski when they discovered their dream home in the residential enclave of Peninsula Point in Newport Beach, California. Because to everyone else, the house seemed more like a nightmare. “The kitchen had been completely torn out. It was uninhabitable!” says Karen Mathiesen Brown, whom the Lipkowskis commissioned, along with her sister and fellow designer Kristina Mathiesen, to transform the house. “They bought the place knowing that they would have to redo everything,” Brown says, “but that’s exactly what they wanted: a house in a family-friendly community, one that was a blank canvas, so they could make it their own.”

It was the ideal solution for the Lipkowskis, who were seeking a slower way of life, away from the heavy car and foot traffic that came with their previous home’s location near Newport’s bustling pier and boardwalk. With two young daughters, Lauren and Kate, in tow, the couple wanted to plant roots somewhere the girls could safely explore on their scooters and skateboards—but they didn’t want to sacrifice being in the center of it all, either, so they tapped Brown and Mathiesen to craft a home built to be welcoming.

“They’re such a fun family,” says Brown, “and the house had to reflect that. It had to be comfortable, modern, and great for entertaining.” Working with architect Eric Aust and builder Tim Grady, the designers did away with the old shingled siding—in favor of smooth, contemporary stucco and HardiePlank siding—and tore down the interior walls



The subway tile in the kitchen is by Walker Zanger. The pendants are from Rejuvenation, and the rug is by Dash & Albert. The fire pit in the courtyard (above) is stacked with cannon balls, an alternative to traditional wood logs. The end table in the living room (left) is from David Alan Collection, and the floor lamp is from Roger’s Gardens.



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in the main living areas to create an open floor plan with a new, modern kitchen, a built-in breakfast nook, and a cozy living room that opens onto a courtyard.

Upstairs, Brown and Mathiesen had the dated wallpaper painstakingly removed before cloaking each room in fresh coats of white paint, relying instead on modern art and fun fabrics and accessories to provide the perfect splashes of color and intrigue. In the room that Lauren and Kate share, for example, a hot pink sheepskin rug, chevron throws, and a tongue-in-cheek framed print boasting valley girl slang jazz up the light walls, carpeting, and white bedding. The master bedroom, too, is all shades of neutral with the exception of a statement-making deep, peacock blue settee at the foot of the bed and a graphic duvet on top.

The real beauty of the house, however, lies in the ways it seamlessly integrates its indoor and outdoor spaces. Large French doors open from the living room out to the front of the house, where the Lipkowskis use their courtyard as a true extension of the interiors, complete with a fire pit, a dining table, and plenty of seating options. “It’s unusual; you don’t often see a fully furnished outdoor area like this at the front of the home,” says Brown. “But the family wanted it to be accessible to their neighborhood friends—they can just hop in from the sidewalk and join the festivities.”

When the daughters aren’t out there creating works of art or racing each other down the block, they’re swaying on the handmade swings crafted by the designers’ own father. “This house was a family affair in more ways than one,” Brown says. “Our dad put a lot of work into those swings, finding and sanding the discs and then covering them in marine-grade paint; he even tested different ropes before suspending them from the tree in front. It was special for the girls.”

And the best part? When they’re craving just a little more excitement, they don’t have to go far. The beach is one block away, and the Lipkowskis take advantage of it often. Tina and Jim credit their design team with delivering exactly what they wanted, which can be spelled out pretty clearly with a glance at the eclectic artwork hanging throughout the home, such as the large, lit-up letters in the playroom that promise “F-U-N.” And then, of course, there’s the quirky saying that hangs in the girls’ bedroom and details how long the Lipkowskis hope to stay: “For like ever.” 🍷 **For more information, see Sources, page 113.**



Clockwise from top, left: The wallpaper in the powder bath is by Phillip Jeffries; the double sconce is from Rejuvenation. The tree swings were custom designed for the girls. The master bedroom nightstands are from Z Gallerie; the lamps are from Crate & Barrel. The chandelier in the girls’ room is from IKEA, and the poster is from Super Rural. Opposite: The outdoor table is from West Elm.