



# The Best Coast

A switch in coasts hones interior designer Kevin Isbell's luxe, layered style

by **ABIGAIL STONE** photography by **READ MCKENDREE**



**LEFT:** Isbell and Corna on the home's deep front porch. "This is basically what sold us on the house, especially coming from New York where outdoor space is at a premium," says Isbell. **RIGHT:** The living room's large arched window looks out on the street. Texture—the Thibaut fabric that covers the custom sofa, a subtle woven from Malabar on the club chair, the ottoman's vintage textile, the fluffiness of the antique Moroccan rug—helps unify the pieces.

## While the weather is often

the draw that pulls New Yorkers to L.A., for an interior designer the call is more nuanced; they don't come for the sun as much as for the sunlight. "The light is very different here," says interior designer Kevin Isbell. "It's so beautiful, it almost makes colors shimmer." It's one of the things that drew Isbell and Gianantonio Corna, his partner in life and business, to L.A. and encouraged them to stay. Another was the 1920s Spanish Revival-style home they stumbled upon in Fairfax.

While the two-bedroom, 1,200-square-foot rental was move-in ready, Isbell put his own stamp on it. He washed the main rooms in Benjamin Moore's Mascarpone. The bedroom received a coat of Benjamin Moore's Mountainview, a watery blue green, while the breakfast room's light chartreuse, where the two start their day, is courtesy of Benjamin Moore's Polar Lights. "Coming from New York, this house seems palatial. We went from no dining spaces to two," Isbell laughs. "But we use them because, being married to an Italian, you eat every meal at a table." In the dining room, rather than place the table in the center of the room where it might hinder the flow of traffic, Isbell moved it to one side. A Chinese lantern that's graced his last three homes swings atop a mid-century walnut dining table by Foster-McDavid. It's surrounded by Adrian Pearsall chairs that were discovered at Wertz Brothers, a vintage furniture store in West Los Angeles that's become a frequent source. (The living room's McGuire stool and wicker chair, a bedroom chest and the chairs in the breakfast room were also found there.)

Instead of draperies, Indian saris cover the lower parts of the windows in the front of the house. "Typically I'm a drapery person, but we moved here for the sun and the sky and I wanted to be able to see them outside the window," says Isbell. A large mirror with mullion panes echoes the shape of the giant arched opening that dominates the living room. Underneath, a sleek console discovered on 1st Dibs was chosen because its rosewood base mimics the name of the street the house is on. "It's a piece that means California and this house to us," says Isbell.

The blue lamp in the bedroom is one of the pieces that made the trek across the country. "Everything else was purchased here," says Isbell, who put the house together in a whirlwind four weeks. "I can't function as a creative in a house that's not done." The month of intensive shopping trips also served to introduce him to the city's design stores. While lockdown put a damper on Isbell's explorations, it confirmed that his decor instincts were right on target. "I reached out to everyone who was quarantining in a home I designed for them," he shares, "and they all responded that the spaces worked beautifully." Their new home also passed the quarantine test. "We love this house," says Isbell, "It feels like that comfortable pair of jeans that has been broken in and just fit great."



**OPPOSITE PAGE, ABOVE:** The blue lamp, a relic of the Gramercy Arts Club and the painting hung over the bed, discovered at a shop in New York, were some of the treasured things that made the move from New York. **BELOW:** Chairs found at Wertz Brothers and a built-in banquette upholstered in fabric from Ballard surround a wood-topped Saarinen table. **THIS PAGE:** "I knew that having a table in the middle of the room that you're constantly having to move around wasn't going to work for us, so I put the banquette against the wall and strung my trusty Chinese lantern that I take with me everywhere and swagged it over." The Adrian Pearsall chairs, which Isbell had covered in bright orange silk velvet from Loro Piana, were discovered at Wertz Brothers.

