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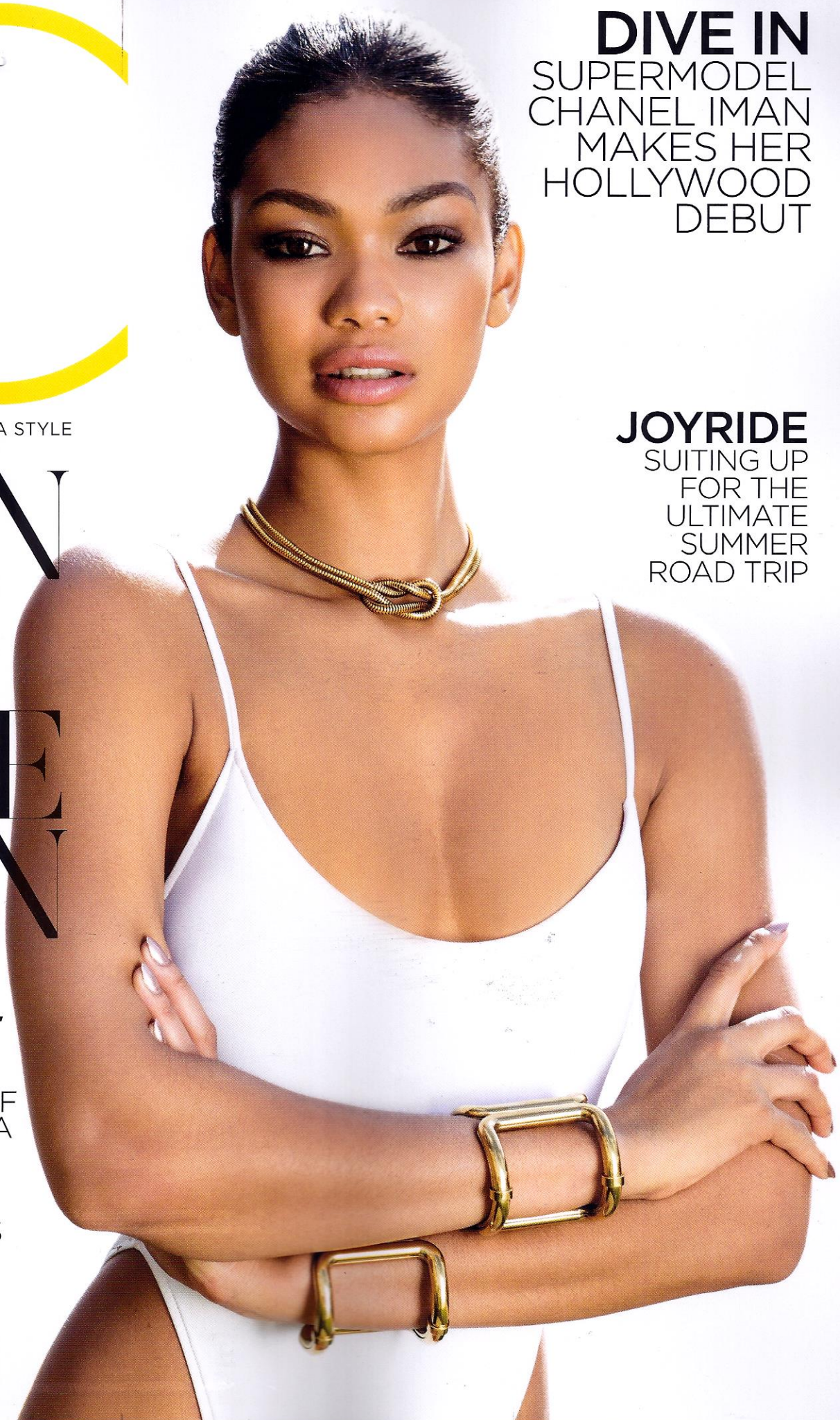
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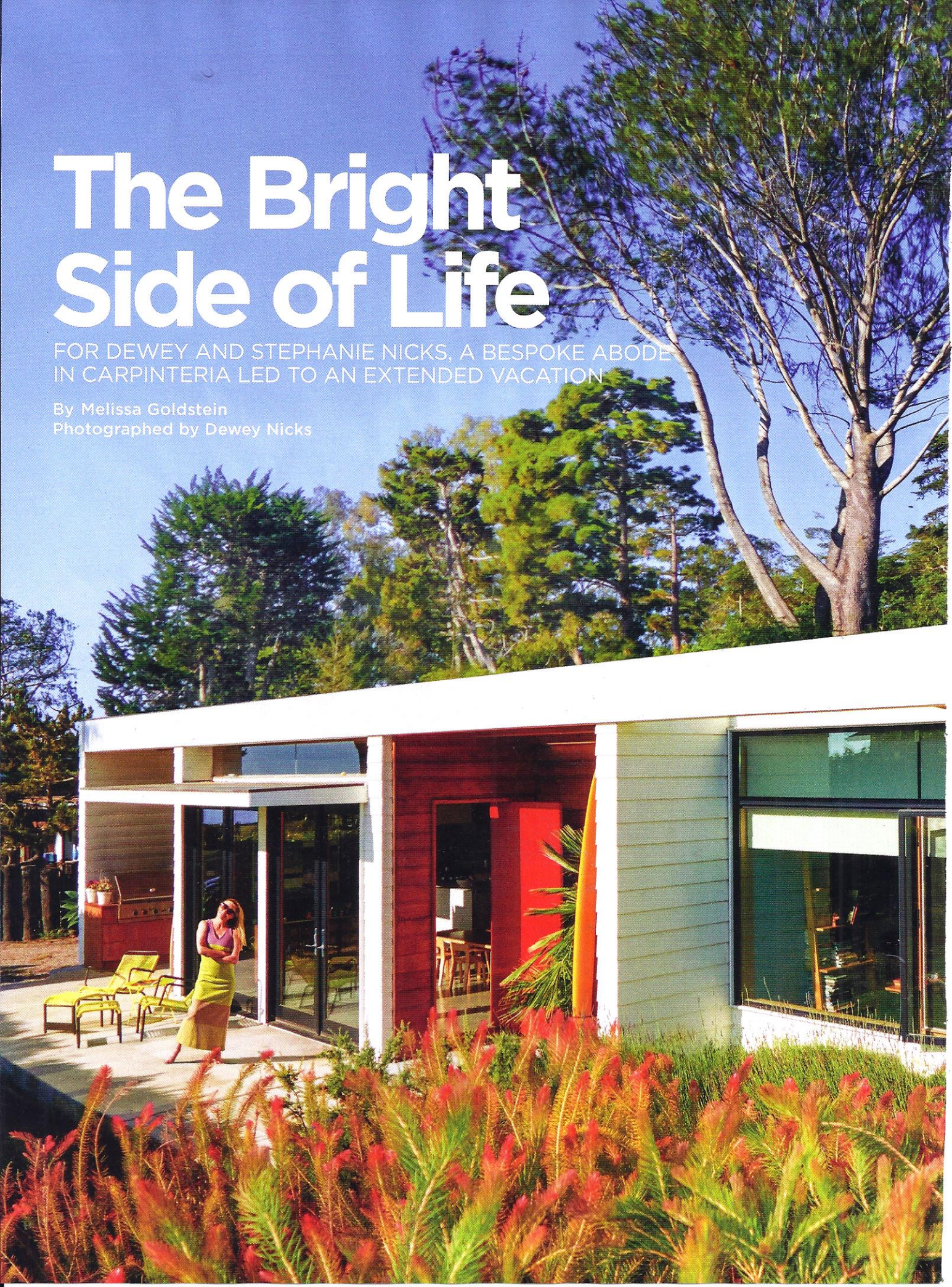


The Bright Side of Life

FOR DEWEY AND STEPHANIE NICKS, A BESPOKE ABODE IN CARPINTERIA LED TO AN EXTENDED VACATION

By Melissa Goldstein

Photographed by Dewey Nicks



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STEPHANIE SAID, 'Let's just go live in an art project for a year,'" remembers lifestyle and fashion photographer Dewey Nicks of his wife's idea to temporarily move their family from L.A. to the surf town of Carpinteria.

"We thought, we'll always have this nice time that we gave ourselves as a present."

Six years later, the couple and their now-12-year-old twins, son George and daughter Madeleine, are still happily ensconced in their "vacation home": a high modernist-meets-New England traditional collaboration built from the ground up with architect Barbara Bestor, where a typical day sees the family rise with the sun for a "surfers' breakfast" of eggs, tortillas, black beans and avocado, and conversation spanning everything from HGTV to iconic French fashion photographer Guy Bourdin amid a soundtrack of Page Cavanaugh and Peggy Lee records.

"They have psychotically good taste, and they're very astute 'architecture people,'" says Bestor of the Nickses (Stephanie previously worked as a producer on photo shoots, which is how the couple met). "They lived in an Irving Gill house for a long time, then a super-modern house with Terrazzo flooring, and then a house with a Kelly Wearstler type of vibe in the flats of Beverly Hills—they're open to fluid [stylistic] identities."

The vision for these oceanfront digs was yet another departure, and utilitarian in origin: "We wanted to be able to take bicycles, paddleboards and kayaks in and out of the house—to have a place that sand could come into—so, almost like a garage," says Dewey.

Bestor's blueprint adheres to the neighborhood-imposed 13-foot building height cap while maximizing natural light via sawtooth roofs: "The house has a kind of Mies [van der Rohe]-ian profile—flat, low and horizontal, but also containing a lot of spatial variation on the inside so it feels spacious," says Bestor, who selected a "low-key seaside weather-friendly materials palette" of rough fir planks, plywood, natural cedar, cement board siding and stucco—allowing the exposed wood construction to frame the interior.

"I've always been drawn to American light-industrial kinds of buildings," says Dewey, whose clients range from Max Mara and Nike to *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*, "so I liked making the structure part of the decorative."

The honest environs are a container for a well-traveled amalgamation of Moroccan rugs, paintings by Monique Prieto and John McLaughlin, photographs by Richard Avedon, Bert Stern and Danny Lyon, statement pieces including a Frank Gehry cardboard chair, and an extensive array of *objets* such as handblown glass vases by Caleb Siemon—all set against a warm, neutral palette. The considered eclectic motif was shaped by the couple's friend, beloved interior designer Paul Fortune, whose bold inclinations helped to seal the easygoing mantra of the home: "He upholstered the dining room chairs in cream suede, and I said, 'Are you crazy? We have little kids and we're at the beach! And what happens when people spill?'" says Stephanie.

"He said, 'They'll still look fantastic.' And that attitude prevailed—like, stuff happens and none of it is tragic," adds Dewey. "We embraced the idea that we would just be comfortable and live with it."

Though Dewey retains a live-work loft near the Hollywood Bowl, and he and Stephanie keep an eye out for family-suited properties in Los Angeles and New York, they admit it's a halfhearted search: It's hard to beat their current lifestyle, in which itineraries are dictated by the tides (the beach is a mere 100 yards away), spontaneous jaunts to Ojai and Solvang abound, and they have the '70s-era confidence to safely set the kids free in the neighborhood.

"There's nothing better than designing a beach house," says Bestor. "Because what everyone thinks a beach house should be—that's what I think regular life should be." •

OPPOSITE FROM TOP Madeleine Nicks kicks back in the living room, beneath a Monique Prieto painting. The family gathers in the light-drenched dining room. "The sun is a huge part of the way the house works," says Dewey Nicks.





Madeleine practices her swing by the pool. OPPOSITE The master bathroom is tiled with cement Fez tiles from L.A.-based Granada Tile. The cabinets are painted with vibrant Dutch lacquer door paint.