

architecture **for** sale

Quarterly

SPECIAL CALIFORNIA ISSUE

Summer 2014

Paul R. Williams, Architect
The William Ford Hacienda, 1929
Ojai, California

SALE/LEASE OFFERING:

Union Square Architectural Masterpiece

140 Maiden Lane SAN FRANCISCO

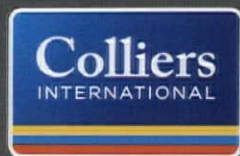


Frank Lloyd Wright's designs are among the most beloved and venerated elements of America's cultural landscape. 140 Maiden Lane provides a discerning buyer with a rare

opportunity to own an architectural treasure: San Francisco's only Frank Lloyd Wright building. Situated at the City's epicenter for luxury retail, surrounded by retail icons Chanel, Hermès, Gucci, Marc Jacobs, and Prada, it shines in an elegant setting on Maiden Lane, Union Square's tree-lined, pedestrian-only shopping street.

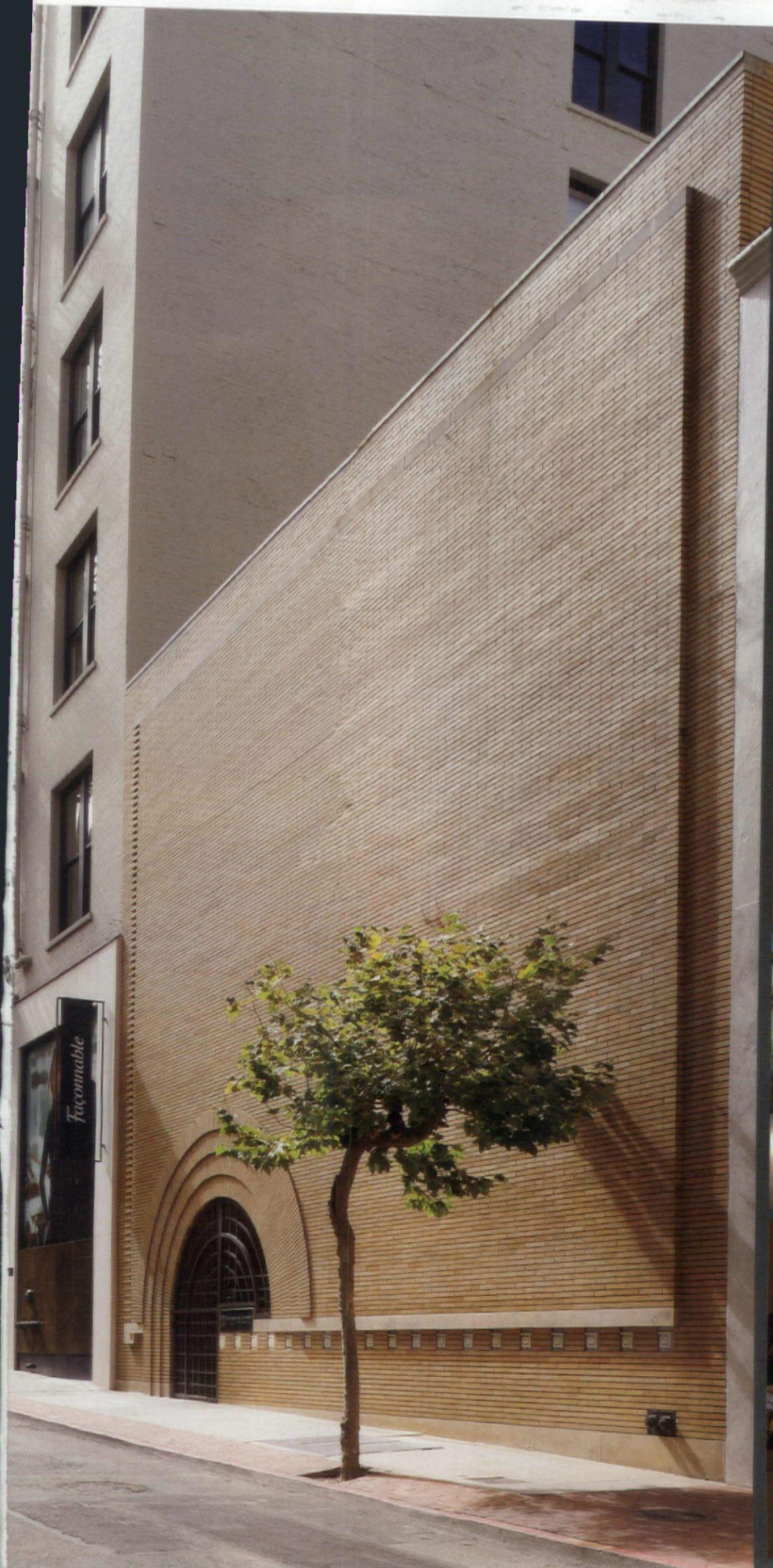
Originally constructed in 1948, 140 Maiden Lane is a small-scale prototype of Mr. Wright's design for the Guggenheim Museum and a shining example of his trademark interplay between nature and geometry. Measuring +/- 7,000 square feet on three levels, it received a complete structural upgrade in 2000 at the hands of Aaron Green, Mr. Wright's protégé, who was meticulous in maintaining its original detail and artistic integrity.

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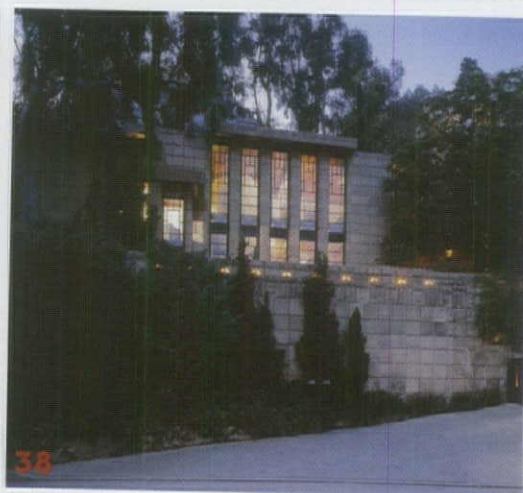
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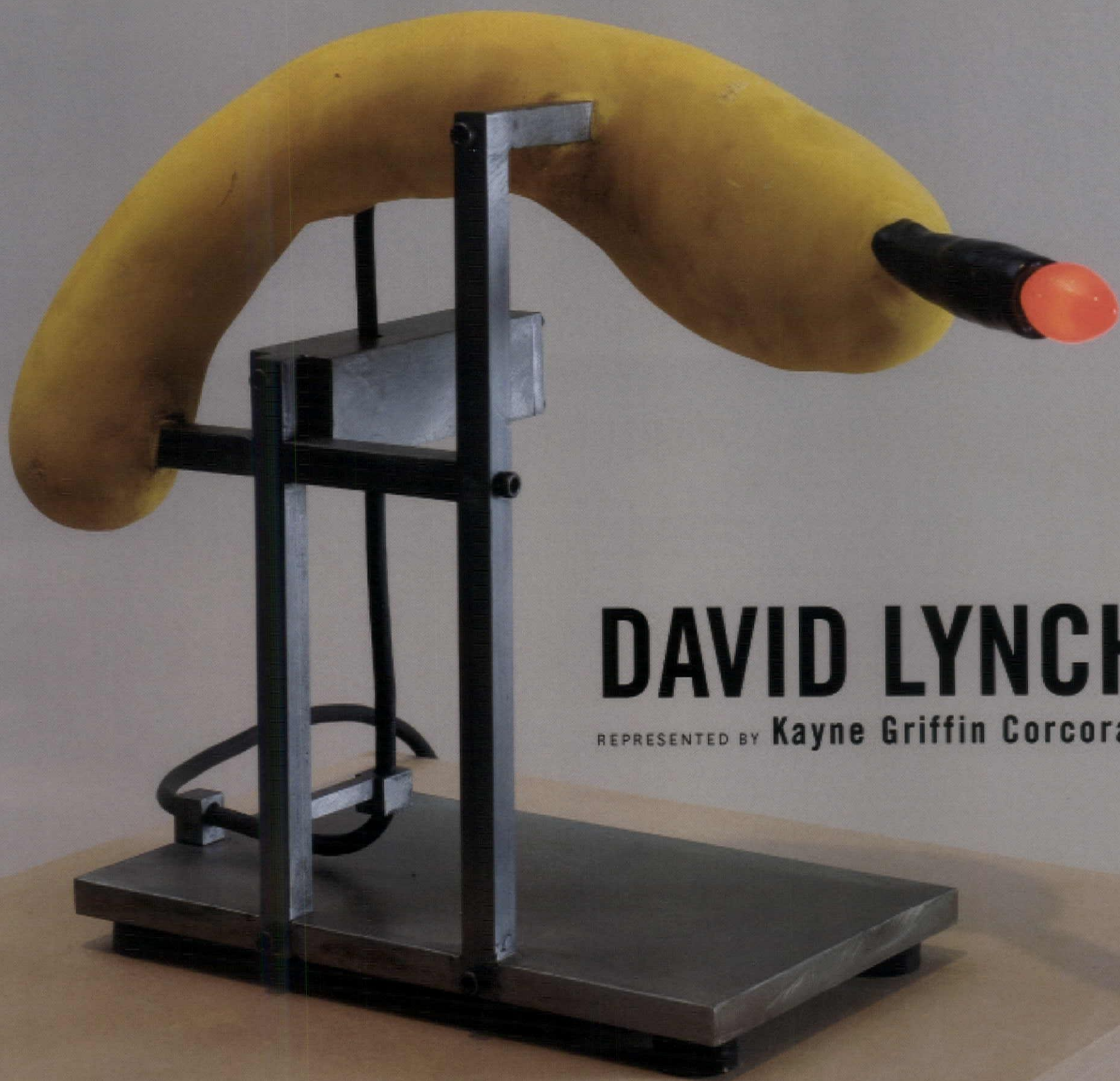
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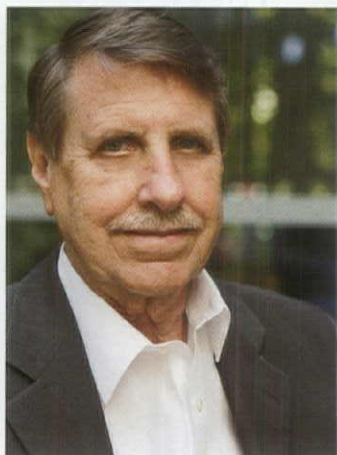
A selection of architecturally significant properties for sale around the world.





DAVID LYNCH

REPRESENTED BY **Kayne Griffin Corcoran**



EDITOR'S NOTE

WHAT IS ARCHITECTURE?

How many times have you gone to a movie with friends and left the multiplex scratching your head? You didn't hate the film; it was mildly entertaining, and though it wasn't very nourishing, it was a harmless way to pass a few hours munching popcorn in a pleasant, air-conditioned room. But dare to expect more and argue that it could've been better, that the plot didn't add up, and the characters didn't behave like, well, real people, then you've made it personal. And someone in the group is sure to sigh and say: "It's just a movie!" As if there are no standards for excellence, no criteria for art, as if it's all just subjective and there are no thoughtful considerations such as tone, nuance, texture, structure, character development, style. Instead, one man's *Ishtar* is another man's *Casablanca*.

The same can be said for architecture. What are the ingredients that come together to separate edifice from architecture? Architect and critic Jonathan Hale argues that "in architecture, the Ugly and Ordinary continues to be so general that it is accepted as inevitable." Clearly, if we at *ArchitectureforSale, Quarterly* meant the term architecture to encompass the contemporary built environment, we would sadly have to agree with Mr. Hale. There would be little to celebrate and much to condemn.

Adding to the confusion, many in the real estate industry have converted the word "architectural" from an adjective to a noun in order to describe almost any structure with a flat roof. And even The MLS – the largest real estate multiple listing service in Southern California – stubbornly employs "architectural" in lieu of a specific style. (And don't get us started about the use of "mid-century modern," a style we first began selling around 1980, in reference to the clean-lined Bauhaus-inspired aesthetic of Richard Neutra, R.M. Schindler, A. Quincy Jones, Pierre Koenig and others – and today is tacked onto almost any suburban tract house erected in the 1960s.)

The truth is, there is good architecture, and there is bad architecture. But how do you tell the difference when even monster McMansions sometimes bear the stamp of an architect on their plans? And so, in light of that, just what do we really hope to accomplish with *ArchitectureforSale*?

Like *Architectural Digest*, *Architectural Record*, and the A.I.A. journal *Architecture*, we choose to define architecture as those buildings that creatively enhance living and elevate the human spirit. Some would say this is architecture with a capital A. But there is nothing presumptuous about this. Because our definition encompasses vernacular architecture such as indigenous pueblos, the early adobes of the Southwest, the Victorian "painted ladies" of San Francisco, and perhaps even a log cabin.

The architecture we choose to represent at **ArchitectureforSale.Com**, and here in the pages of *ArchitectureforSale, Quarterly* will always have a presence about it, a certain style that may look simple or easy but actually represents a lot of thought, study and planning. Even if there is an instinctual component to our definition, we hope you will agree that even though these properties are for sale, there is a priceless element to their contributions to the built environment, the lifestyles they afford, and their gifts to the spirit of each individual they touch.

Crosby Doe

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Crosby Doe".

Contributors

JOCELYN GIBBS

Jocelyn Gibbs is the Curator of the Architecture and Design Collection, Art Design & Architecture Museum, UC Santa Barbara. An archivist and historian, she previously was Head of Special Collections Cataloging at the Getty Research Institute and the Associate Director for Collections at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal.



NICHOLAS OLSBERG

Nicholas Olsberg was Chief Curator and then Director of the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal, from its opening in 1989 to 2004. He has published, lectured and curated exhibitions on a wide range of architectural figures and topics including major studies of Arthur Erickson, Frank Lloyd Wright, Carlo Scarpa, John Lautner, Cliff May, and the delineator Carlos Diniz; a recent series of magazine portfolios on architectural drawings; and lectures and workshops on the urban character and forms of Los Angeles.



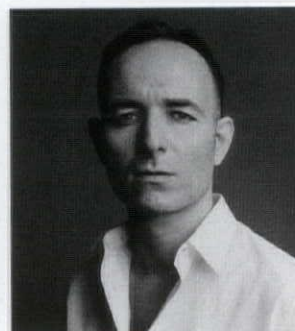
PIERLUIGI SERRAINO

Pierluigi Serraino, AIA, is an architect, author and educator. Prior to entering his independent practice, he has worked for Mark Mack, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, and Anshen + Allen. He has lectured extensively on postwar American architecture, California modernism, architectural photography, changes in architectural practice, and digital design. His work and writings have been widely published, and he has authored four books, among them Donald Olsen, *Architect of Habitable Abstractions* (Stout Publishers, Fall 2013), *Modernism Rediscovered* with Julius Shulman (Taschen, 2000), and *NorCalMod: Icons of Northern California Modernism* (Chronicle Books, 2006), as well as numerous essays. Pierluigi is recipient of the 2013 Graham Foundation award for his upcoming book on architectural photographer Robert Damora (Taschen, forthcoming in 2015).



MARC ATLAN

French born Creative Director Marc Atlan is one of the creative forces behind some of today's most iconic brands including Comme des Garçons, Helmut Lang, Yves Saint Laurent and James Perse, to name a few. The recipient of more than 50 awards within the design world, Atlan also holds the honor of having been featured as a Top 10 Design of the Year by Time Magazine.



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Classic California Courtyard Hacienda
Jai, California



*Paul R. Williams
Architect*



William Ford House, Ojai, California, 1929

By Jocelyn Gibbs

Many houses evoke personal memories for current or former inhabitants. Some great houses, if they are recognized and preserved, become part of our collective memory for cultural and historical reasons. The William Ford house in Ojai, California, designed by Paul Revere Williams in 1929, is remarkable for its client, for its excellent design by a historically important architect, and for its role in the history of Ojai. A recent restoration by the current owners should make this piece of Southern California's architectural history even better known.

The Client

William B. Ford (1873-1934) was a cousin of the automobile manufacturer, Henry Ford, and an executive with the Edward Ford Glass Company in Toledo, Ohio. He had close ties to Edward Drummond Libbey (1854-1925), an important figure in Ojai's history. Libbey, the owner of the Libbey Glass Company in Toledo and founder of the Toledo Museum of Art, fell in love with the Ojai Valley on a visit in 1908. Libbey and his wife commissioned Myron Hunt in 1910 to design their winter home in Ojai. **Fig.1**

The town had been laid out in 1874 by a developer named R. G. Surdam and called Nordhoff until 1921, presumably after Charles Nordhoff, who wrote "California: For Health, Pleasure and Residence" (1873). After fires in 1916 and 1917 destroyed most of the wooden buildings of the town, the popular story is that Libbey was largely responsible for selecting the architects, Mead and Requa, and financing the rebuilding, though there are indications that Mead and Requa were working on a plan for the plan as early as 1912-1913. The downtown arcade, bell tower, and other Spanish revival buildings that give present-day Ojai its Spanish Colonial Revival character are at least partly the result of Libbey's vision for Ojai and his support. In 1921 the city was incorporated and renamed Ojai. Surrounded by mountains, the Ojai Valley is 10 miles long and 3 miles wide, just northeast of Los Angeles and east of Santa Barbara. Libbey promoted the charms of the area to his friends and colleagues, among them the Los Angeles oilman and mining engineer, Irving Augur and Libbey's fellow Ohioan, William B. Ford. (Ford's glass company merged with Libbey's in 1930, after Libbey's death, to form Libbey-Owens-Ford.) Augur and Ford brought their families to Ojai and each commissioned the Los Angeles architect Paul Revere Williams to design a winter home.

The Site

The Ojai Country Club Estates subdivision was developed in 1926 on sixty acres adjacent to the Ojai Country Club, originally designed in 1923 by Pasadena architect Wallace Neff and now part of the Ojai Valley Inn. The development of this area testifies to its popularity among wealthy visitors from the East and Midwest who escaped to California in the winters. William Ford purchased 10 acres in the Ojai Country Club Estates in 1928 and the house he commissioned from Paul R. Williams is reported to be one of the first to be built in the subdivision. Williams placed the house on a gentle rise that still gives expansive views over the valley. Originally the Ford holdings included a tennis court and acres of mature orchards and oaks. Today the site comprises over 3 acres.

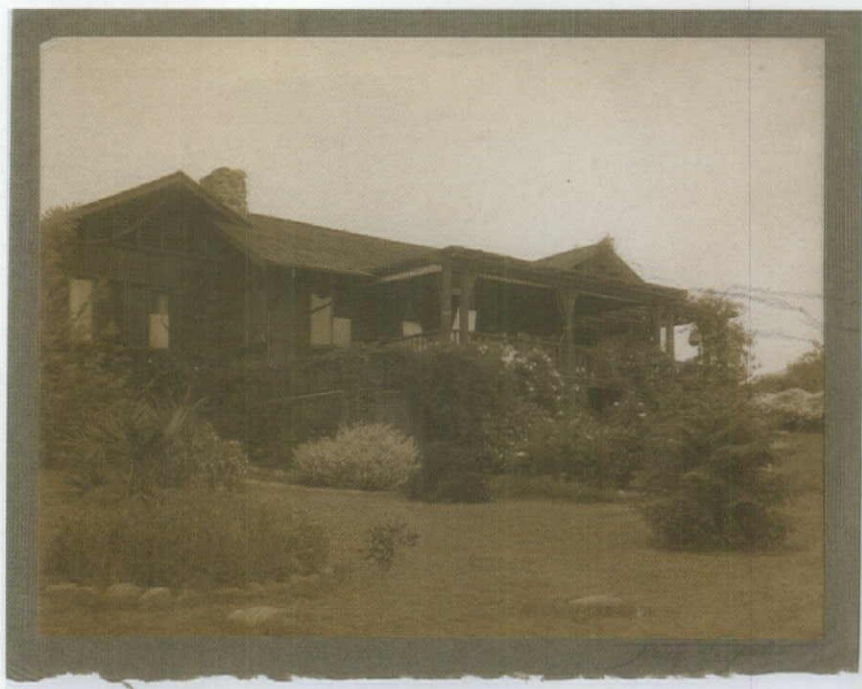


Fig.1





The Architect

Paul Revere Williams (1894-1980) earned his architecture license in 1921, after studying at the University of Southern California. He is known today for his many elegant homes for Hollywood celebrities, who prized his skill at designing in historical styles. Williams also created some of L.A.'s significant modern structures of the 1950s and 1960s: schools, public housing, and commercial buildings.

He was part of the team that worked on the Los Angeles International Airport and was well connected in the profession until his retirement in 1973. In addition to his many works, however, Williams holds a special place in the history of Southern California as one of the nation's most successful African-American architects. How did Ford come to select Williams as his architect? For many historical buildings this is an intriguing but unanswerable question.

There are, however, several plausible links between Williams and Ford. Paul Williams had previously designed a Spanish Colonial Revival house for James Riley in Ojai in 1926-1927. Riley was an investment banker in the Los Angeles firm of Drake, Riley and Thomas. What oilmen need, is investors and Irving Van Aken Augur (1886-1930), the Los Angeles friend of Libbey and of Ford, was the founder of the Bolsa Chico Oil Company and no doubt knew Riley. Augur had, along with Ford and Riley, succumbed to the charms of Ojai. After completing James Riley's house in 1927, Williams designed an Ojai estate (house, caretaker's cottage, and stables) for Augur in 1929, at the same time that he was working on the Ford estate. Libbey or Riley may have connected all these successful businessmen.

The House

The Spanish Colonial Revival style was popular in the 1920s and Williams designed several houses in this idiom through the first decade of his practice. His Baird/Stewart/Garza house of 1926 in Glendale and the Riley, Augur and Ford houses in Ojai show his mastery of the details of the style. His use of the Spanish Colonial Revival, however, differed from Cliff May's deliberately rough gestures that mimicked vernacular adobe and wooden ranch buildings. Williams's use of historical styles, Spanish revival, Georgian, or English Tudor, was always refined. His Beaux-Art based training showed in the clarity of his proportions and details. Cliff May was a romantic scene-maker; Williams was a trained architect who became skilled at using his knowledge of historicist styles to enhance the lives of his many wealthy celebrity clients. Williams's reserved handling of the Spanish Revival style, which, like George Washington Smith's best designs, took inspiration from the modest Andalusian farmhouse, was perfect for an upper-class Midwestern businessman, such as Ford.





For the Ford house, Williams used concrete block, to resemble adobe brick but with a cleaner line, and lath-and-plaster painted white to create a hacienda style structure of one- and two-story volumes, roofed with red tiles. Simple wood shutters are painted robin's egg blue. The refinement of Williams's design is especially evident in the scale and proportions of the house. On approaching the residence, the driveway and parking for guests is neatly separated from a more private, secluded driveway for use by the family and staff. The front façade is elegant and reserved. It gives no clue to the actual size of the structure, which is quite large with sixteen rooms, including eight bedrooms and 8 bathrooms, a library, large butler's pantry and larger kitchen, in 8,000 square feet.



Williams appreciated and made the most of entrances, saying, "Probably the most important room to consider from a standpoint of décor is the entrance hall—this is the area that speaks out the welcome." (Hudson, 70) As is typical of the style, the entrance hall opens onto a large, light-filled loggia that provides views to a garden through arched glass doors and windows, and leads to dining, kitchen, and servant rooms to one side, and to the living room, library, and stairwell to bedrooms on the other. The many rooms unfold, one after the other, and on and on if one is lucky enough to tour the entire house. Despite the size, the house is not pretentious. The rooms are beautifully scaled: ample but not oversized and each is made graciously individual with fine detailing.



Williams did not hesitate to include modern conveniences, such as large wood-framed pocket doors that slide into the walls to create clean, unfussy openings from the living room to the central courtyard. Pull-down brass screens roll up into discrete housings on the windows and doors. He also employed fine woodwork in the ceilings and in the mahogany-paneled library. Exquisite plasterwork mimics wood in one ceiling, creates gentle curves in another. The central courtyard is completely enclosed by the first floor volumes of the house and the attached garage. At one end a loggia-framed seating area includes a fireplace (one of five in the house); at the other end a graceful staircase leads to guest bedrooms. The current owners refurbished the courtyard that was puzzlingly empty when they acquired the house. It now includes plantings around a tiled fountain and brick-lined rill. The white-painted brick columns of the rounded arches in the courtyard are decorated with flushed dentiled capitals, which produce subtle decorative patterns of light and shade. Many of the rooms open to or look out on the courtyard or other terrace or balcony.



Custom tile is used throughout the house. The kitchen is entirely clad in yellow tile that covers the walls and ceiling, for ease of cleaning. Every bathroom has its own distinctive decorative tile, laid in a ribbon-like row that encircles the room. Each bedroom has multiple windows that can be opened to bring in healthy night air, in keeping with the thinking of the time and the concern about tuberculosis. The larger bedrooms have sleeping porches, which extend the rooms with multiple large windows on three walls, to allow cross ventilation.

Not surprisingly, large panes of glass are used everywhere in the house, lending a clean and surprisingly modern look that speaks to the wealth of the client and advertises the Ford family business. Glass panes were expensive to produce until after World War II. Williams's modernity shows throughout the house. Despite the decorative elements common to the Spanish revival style—red tile on the roof, balconies with wrought iron, arches and decorative tile—the composition of the house, inside and out, is refined rather than exotic. One of the best views from which to admire Williams's skill is the rear façade, which faces the swimming pool, designed by Williams with simple curved ends. The multiple volumes of the large house are beautifully juxtaposed in a balance of scale, color, and texture.

William Ford died in 1934, five years after the house was completed. Mrs. Ford and the children moved to a family-owned ranch in Montana shortly after. Subsequently the house suffered neglect for many years but fortunately no remodeling marred the original structure. The current renovation, which took about four years, has justly earned the house landmark status as Ventura County Cultural Heritage Landmark no.169.

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**GOING NATIVE:
THE 'NEW CALIFORNIA HOUSE'**

NICHOLAS OLSBERG





HOUSE. A.

American architects in the first years of the Twentieth Century were in desperate search for an end to what Joy Wheeler Dow called “the reign of terror” wrought by the grandiose, over-wrought and bombastic taste in building of the Gilded Age, with its deference to the chateaux and palaces of Europe. Calling, like many others, for an “American Renaissance” that could uncover a native tradition of building in which a burgeoning new nation might feel at home, Dow pleaded: “We want to belong somewhere and to something, not to be entirely cut off by ourselves as stray atoms in boundless space . . . We may not indeed have inherited the house we live in; the chances are we have not . . . but let us pretend that [we] did and that it is now ours.”

California’s initial response to such calls for an authentic American way of building was to look either to the Japanese inflected Arts and Crafts, as in Bernard Maybeck, the Pasadena school, or the first efforts of Irving Gill; or to the highest domestic embodiment of the classical ideal – the Italian villa. The Italianate, with its Mediterranean roots seeming to somehow echo the region’s Hispanic history, climate and landscape, was the tradition to which the first grand mansions, public buildings and hotels in southern California adhered, like Charles Whittelsey’s Wentworth Hotel in Pasadena, the first great houses of Wallace Neff, and the extraordinary public work of Myron Hunt.



Illustrations 1. 2. Smith and Riggs, Ojai ‘Maravilla’ houses 1 and 2 UCSB

By the midTeens, however, some, like the self-taught architects George Washington Smith and John Byers in their own first houses, had already begun to look to southern Spain as a source. Others were learning from the exotic mix of Spanish, Pueblo and Mexican that Fred Harvey’s architects – including Whittelsey himself – had employed for the tourist hotels along the path of the railroad west. Then, as the great home-building boom of the Twenties got under way, the campaigns of the California Landmarks Club to preserve the missions, and of Charles Lummis and others to promote a return to building in the fashion of early California through two great landmarks rising above Los Angeles and San Diego – the Southwest Museum and the Junipero Serra Memorial – began to take their effect. Missions were restored. Great country haciendas appeared, like Hunt’s for Kellogg in Pomona, or Neff’s for King Gillette in Calabasas. Tract homes with the same flavor – many on models by architects as sophisticated as Gill and Roy Kelley – quickly followed suit, using the same romantic echoes of Spain and old Mexico as the silent films of “Ramona” or the “Mark of Zorro,” and even the promotional talents of Mary Pickford herself, to sell them.



Byers, Temple House UCSB

Much of this new work was boosted and informed by the appearance, in 1917, of a large illustrated publication by the young Austin Whittelsey, produced by New York's Architectural Book Publishing Company, the leading supplier of source books of measured drawings of historic buildings, from the Georgian mansion to the Cape Cod saltbox, all of which it put forward as models for modern America's emerging built landscape. Austin was to have followed the path of his father, drawing features among the landmarks of Germany, France and Italy that could be imitated in the American home. But wartime conditions limited his long journey to Spain, and there he found himself fascinated by Andalusian farmhouses, rural churches, little patio townhouses, small haciendas, and among them all the extraordinary interlacing of garden and dwelling. He scrupulously titled his work "the Minor Architecture of Southern Spain" . . . At one stroke Whittelsey had turned the eyes of the Book Company and its subscribers away from grandiose and over-decorated models toward the persistent simple patterns of the everyday dwelling.

By the time the Company produced the major published model book on Mexican domestic, Garrison and Rustay's 1930 Mexican Houses, it had become inevitable to follow Whittelsey's lead, seeking out a Mexico marked by sturdy restraint and atmosphere rather than the sort of ornament and splendor Bertram Goodhue had introduced at the San Diego Exposition of 1915. Mexican Houses looked for the play of blank walls, patios and steps rather than the play of light upon turned pilasters. The authors carefully eschewed the "monumental and pretentious," to locate the "organic character" and "simple variety" of detail in the vernacular – looking for everything "good that was not grand" in the colonial Mexican tradition. Theirs is the casual and unorthodox spirit – irregular, growing over time, spilling out across the landscape, and immensely varied -- in which May's house at La Habra was conceived and which makes his work so compelling.



4. 5. Roland Coate, Bixby House, Pasadena: Dining room, Staircase UCSB

These proved to be unexpectedly authentic and adaptable new sources for a native California style, in tune with open living and a forgiving climate. Richard Requa – whose work in Ojai began at the same time – soon followed suit, with a series of articles in the *San Diego Union*, on examples from early California, and – as John Byers had done a little earlier – went himself to Andalusia in 1926 to study the sources first hand, and for the next decade both worked a wealth of variations upon them. The same spirited interest in the patterns of everyday buildings in the Spanish world took George Washington Smith and Lulah Maria Riggs to central Mexico in 1920 and 1921. From their sketches and studies came the best examples of Santa Barbara's 'colonial style' enforced in the wake of the 1925 earthquake. More immediately, they drew from their sketches in Mexico ideas for the model small houses in Edward Libbey's Ojai 'Arbolada' – an entire subdivision of small lots just to the north of the site on which Ford's house was built, organized on the wandering plan of a working hacienda. There Riggs and Smith found a perfect balance between simplicity and ornament, moving toward an informal and restrained way of crafting homes on an open plan.

By the 1920s architects like Carleton Winslow were turning from distant Mexican idioms to their more local variants, studying and then borrowing from the architectural language they found among the remains of early California homes. As another great exponent of the state's Spanish traditions, the architect Roland Coate, put it, "the new type of early California house" is "a flexible house; it lends itself to many sites; it combines the formal with the informal," and, with its patios and courtyards, speaks to



Carleton Winslow Mollino Viejo, Pasadena UCSB

"a heritage here of out-door living" that "seems to have come down to us from the early freedom of life when this was a Spanish province...the ready access of the out-of-doors which irresistibly conveys itself to the whole of a house, and seems to enlarge the life of the inmates." And, like Paul Williams' house for Ford, May's first large-scale hacienda beautifully bears out Coate's belief that the "new California type" worked "best where it has a chance to spread."

The result was a decisive movement in favor of a 'native' domestic language weaving together early California architecture, its sources in Mexico and Andalusia, and such original and personal variations on the type as Neff's famous circular stairs and Moorish picture windows. There was nothing generic about this hybrid. As the two examples Jocelyn Gibbs discusses show, the range of treatment was rich and varied. Paul Williams' Ford house dates from the subtlest and most sophisticated high point of the hacienda late in the Twenties and shows all the restraint, respect for repeated patterns, and regard for proportion of the classically trained professional. Cliff May's La Habra is entirely different. It exemplifies the scrupulous attention to conveying a rough and ready manner through which May turned back to the casual plan and apparently accidental patterns of the old California ranchos in his brilliant effort to revive their traditions six years later. Nothing is more striking than the differences between these two works. But there is an essential unity to them to 'the California house'. It may have blossomed quite suddenly, but had in fact grown out of a long evolving inquiry with many different trajectories, from the analysis of Monterey to the study of the Moorish, and each architect came to it with a distinctive sensibility. As a critic noted in 1928, "steadily growing from year to year there has been developing an architectural entity, . . . not composed of just those building traditions that were inherited from the days of the Mission" nor of copies from Spain and Mexico, but of something remarkably coherent and so true to its place that it is now "impossible to separate what is native from what is borrowed."



With their informal plans and their interlacing of interiors with the out of doors, we can look back on these 'Californians' now and see how natural was the line that led from the 'Spanish colonial' houses of the Twenties to the famous low-slung, open plan California houses that emerged at mid century.

By 1923 a writer in the *Architectural Forum* could already say that, with its adoption of early Californian, Mexican and Spanish models, "California may be said to have 'found itself' architecturally, a thing not yet true of the East." Indeed, as any film travelogue of the Twenties will show you, they gave to a land full of displaced health-seekers and hopeful migrants exactly that distinctive, and very American, sense of belonging for which Joy Wheeler Dow had called twenty years before: an entirely progressive way of dwelling in a land and within its histories that not only laid the groundwork for the famous Modern work to come, but must surely now be recognized not as a type of slavish historicism but in all its variety and genius as a body of full-fledged original masterworks worthy of meticulous preservation in their own right.

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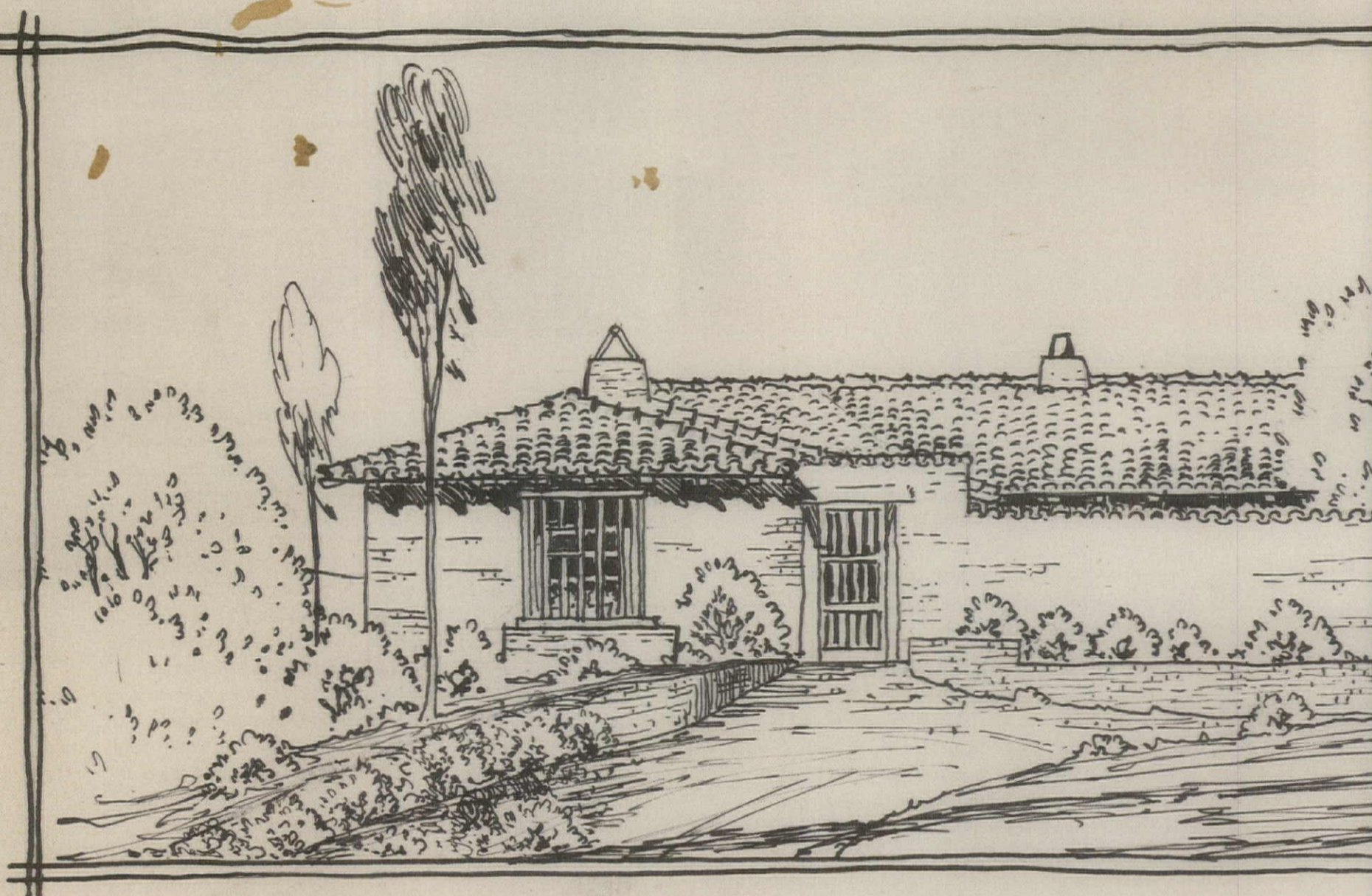
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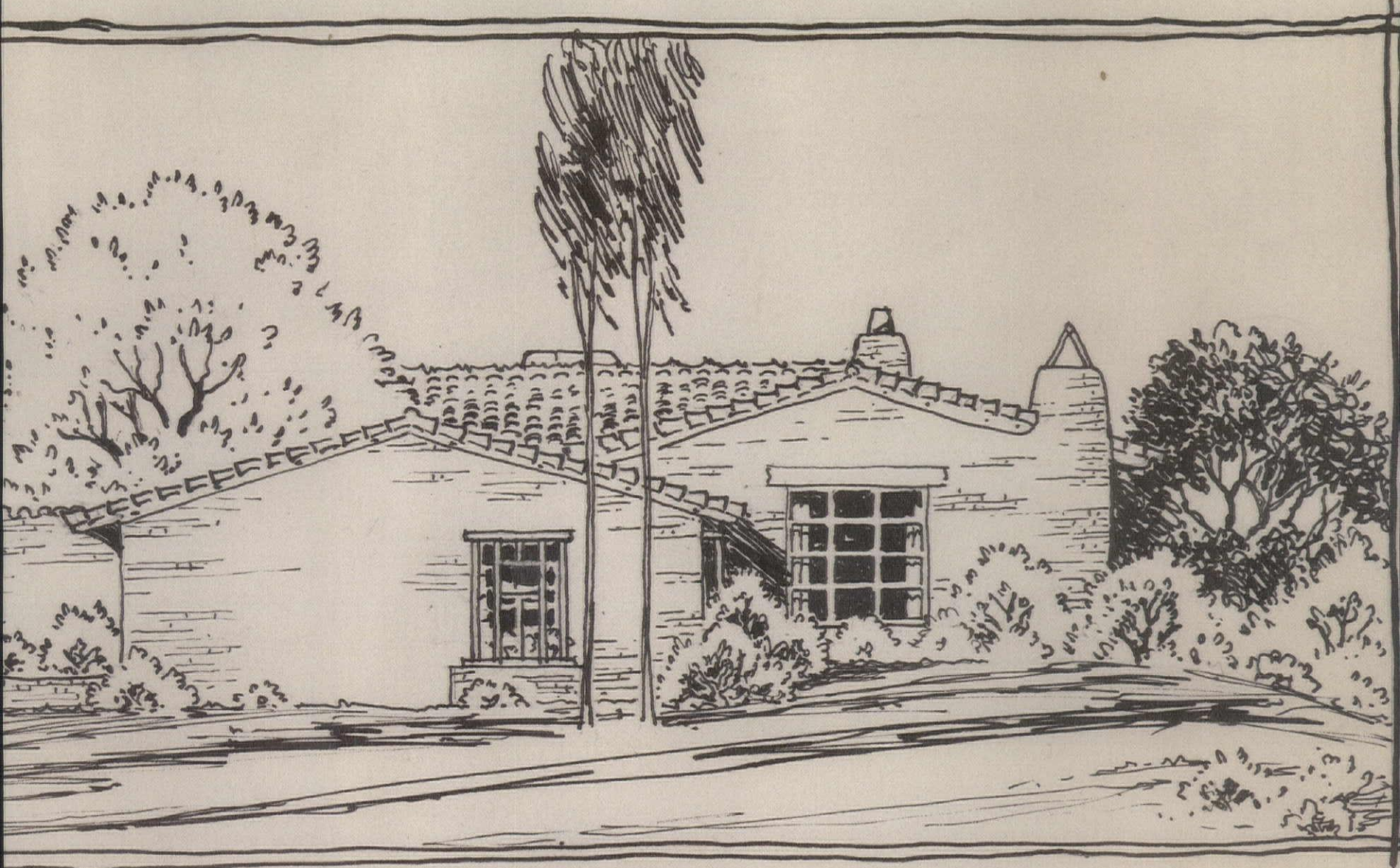
Janss ad for Westwood Hills



The John A. Smith House

La Habra Heights, California

—Jocelyn Gibbs





Cliff May (1908-1989), the designer and builder famous for popularizing the California ranch house, insisted that he “built just one kind of house, had just one style.” The persistence of his vision of what a house should be and how people should live, came from his pride in his family’s California heritage—he was related to most of the land grant families of San Diego County—and from his memories of childhood summers spent on a ranch run by his aunt. The rambling wood and adobe buildings of Jane Magee’s ranch and the indoor-outdoor life there instilled in May a life-long belief that the best way to live was in a ranch house, close to the ground, especially in the beneficent landscape and climate of California.

“If you can’t walk out of the living room or bedroom onto the ground, if you have to go down steps, why you’re not living like a real Californian lives, from the house to the patio . . .”

When May first began designing and building houses in San Diego during the late 1920s, he was fortunate to attract mentors, from among San Diego developers, who helped him get started. May wasn’t trained as an architect but he knew what he liked. He borrowed details for his charming San Diego houses from existing adobe structures, ranch buildings, and from the Spanish Colonial style so popular throughout Southern California in the 1920s.

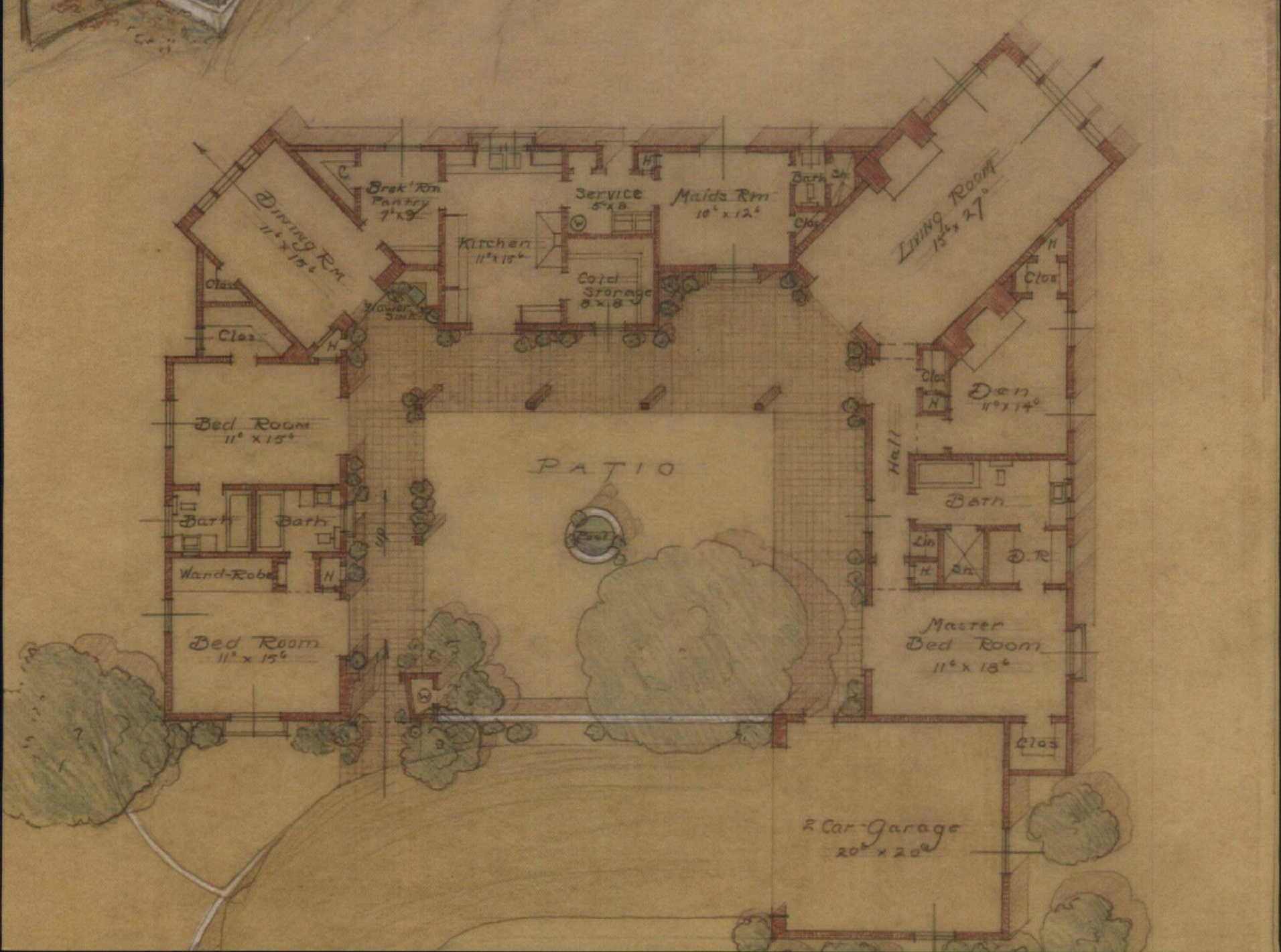
By the early 1930s May had attracted the attention of businessman John Arnholt Smith, who, after visiting several of May’s speculative houses in San Diego, became his most important mentor and business partner. May later acknowledged that Smith had been like a second father. Smith, a San Diego financier who was buying up land and oil wells in Los Angeles, convinced May that the city to the north offered more opportunities for development than San Diego. According to May, Smith told him, “You should get out of San Diego because there will never be any oil there. If you don’t have oil, you don’t have banking, and without banking, why, you’re not going to have a very big city.” Their first project together, and May’s first design beyond the San Diego area, was, as stated on the specifications, a “hacienda for Mr. and Mrs. John A. Smith” built in 1934-1936 on forty acres at the northern edge of Orange County, in the Los Angeles suburb of La Habra.

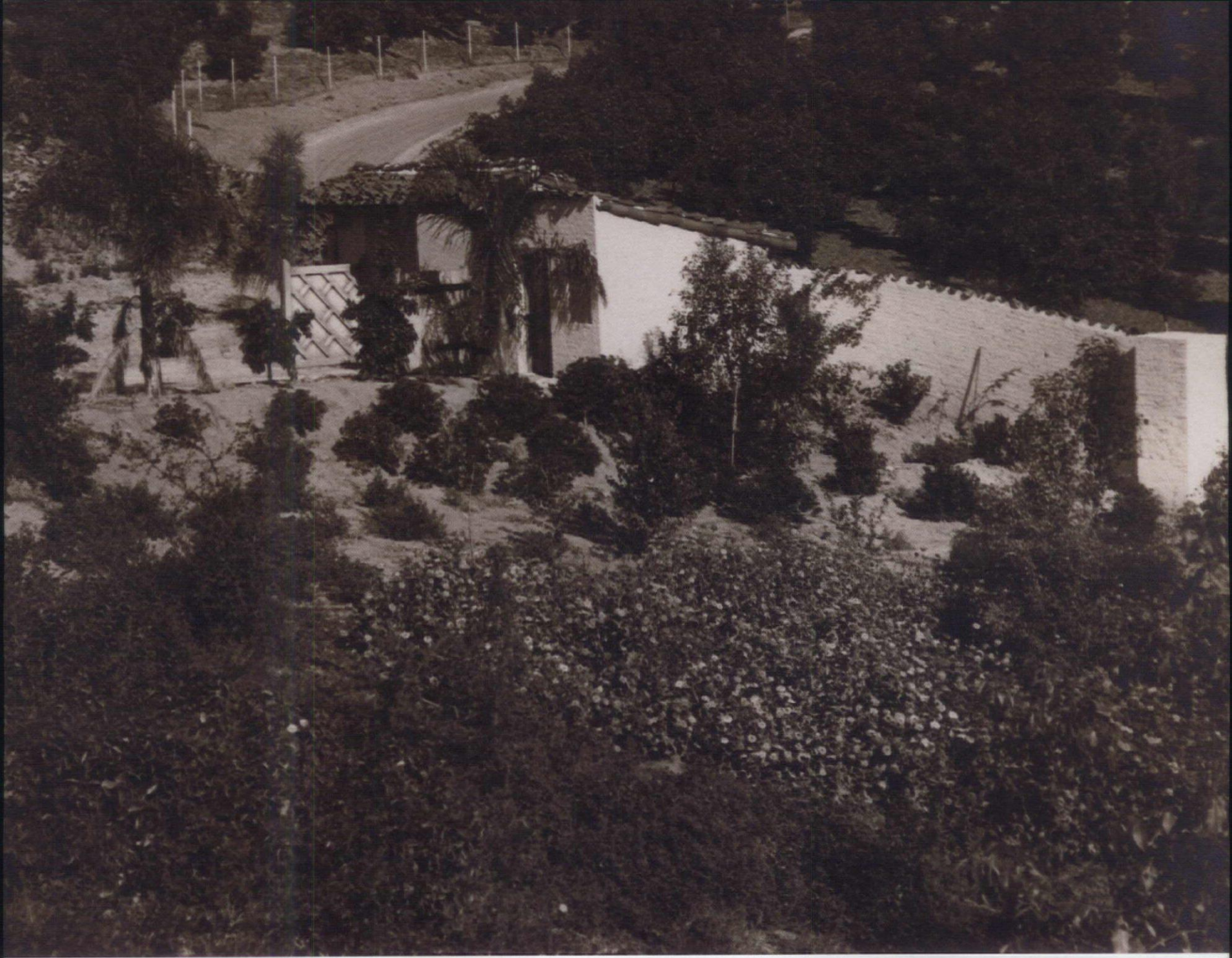
Smith and May used this house as an advertisement for the possibilities of their new partnership. It was the first of the luxury ranch houses that May would design with Smith’s backing, most of them in Los Angeles. They opened the Smith house to the public for several weeks after it was completed and articles and photographs describing the house appeared in local and national magazines, including *Architectural Digest*, *Architectural Forum*, and *Sunset Western Ranch House* through the mid-1940s.



Cliff May designed more than 800 buildings during his eventful career, most of them residences. In the Smith house he had, for the first time, the site and the budget to realize his most expansive ideas about the romance of the California ranch house. May's concept for the Smith house was a low-lying, sprawling, and rustic gentleman's estate. There can be no doubt that he was inspired by the forty-acre undulating site. May placed the house on a slight rise, which gave prominence to the views of citrus, avocado, and walnut groves, as far as the eye could see.







Photographs and drawings from May's archive in the Art, Design & Architecture Museum, UC Santa Barbara, show the house and land as they looked in 1936. A large gatehouse, with tiled roof and heavy wood doors marks the entrance to the property. An unpaved, curving drive arrived at the top of the small hill to the house and attached garage. May often said that his houses didn't have fronts or backs, but his entrance facades always had few openings in order to preserve the privacy of the interior. He always opened other parts of the house to interior courts, the garden landscape, or distant views. The entrance façade of the Smith house, with its whitewashed rough brick walls, red tile roof, and single window covered with a wooden grill, evokes the flavor of the early 19th century, when La Habra was the Spanish land grant property, Rancho Cañada de La Habra. When a drawing of the house appeared in *Sunset Western Ranch Houses* in 1946, the editors added the caption, "Its heritage is unmistakable."

As in nearly all of Cliff May's hacienda style ranch houses, the entrance leads, not to the interior of the house, but to a corridor that opens on one side to an enclosed patio and leads to the interior door to the house.

On the other side of the corridor are two guest bedrooms with two bathrooms between them. The covered and tiled corridor and the tiled octagonal patio fountain would have provided cool relief from the dusty drive and dry, hot climate of the surrounding agricultural lands. The roof profile is low around the edge of the patio, providing shade and a view of the highly textured effect of the randomly laid roof tiles. The patio is the center of the house, which surrounds it on three sides. This plan, which May used several times, is very similar to that of the Estudillo house, the historic adobe in San Diego, built by May's ancestor José Maria Estudillo in 1827.





May was a designer of scenes and a master at creating romantic effects. He evoked the past with rusticated details and by highlighting the primary nature of his materials: bricks, tiles, stucco and wood. Once inside the house proper, the corridor turns the corner to the most enchanting space in the house. The loggia is both a hallway and an informal living room. The dining room, kitchen, and living room each open onto the loggia, which connects on the other side of its length to the patio through a wall of glass windows and doors. Tucked off on the side of the loggia is a corner fireplace in the rounded shape of an adobe kiva. Photographs from the 1930s show that the Smiths furnished the loggia with informal and comfortable rattan chairs and tables. One can imagine family members, staff, ranch hands, and visitors moving through this lovely space, meeting, resting, and enjoying the view to the patio.

May placed the dining room and the living room into the corners at the base of the U-shaped plan. To take advantage of the spectacular site, he swiveled both of these rooms so that they extend out toward the view and the hills in the distance.

The dining room ceiling is full of heavy, rough wooden beams that outline the run and gentle slope of the roof. In vintage photographs the dining furniture, which remains in the house today, is rustic, made of dark wood, and reminiscent of the Monterey Mission style furniture that May saw in Barker Brothers furniture store in San Diego and copied for his first house in 1931. The fabric of the curtains evokes the patterns of serapes. Between the dining room and kitchen is an irregularly shaped breakfast room. May liked, and mimicked, irregular surfaces, colliding rooflines, and irregular-shaped rooms because it reminded him of the roughly made rambling structures of old California, with additions made willy-nilly over the years as needed. On other projects May famously tore down walls that were too straight or smooth, urging his workmen to make them more primitively.

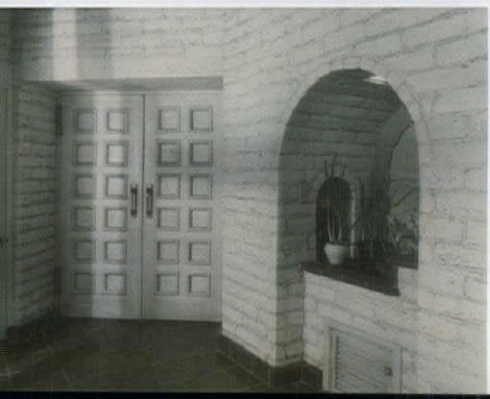
The living room in the Smith house is grand. According to the drawings in the archive, it is more than twice as long as it is wide, measuring approximately 28 feet long by 17 feet wide. The shape and position of the room dramatically emphasizes the view through the large window opposite the living room entrance.



A fireplace in the middle of one side of the room is the social focus of the room and the largest of the four fireplaces in the house. The loggia ends outside the living room at the beginning of the private wing of the house. This arm of the U-shaped plan holds a library, bath, and master bedroom. The master bedroom opens directly onto the patio.

The site is one of the distinctive features of the house, still impressive though it has shrunk over the years. The house has had only four owners to date, but during that time most of Smith's original forty acres were sold off as La Habra developed and the area around the house became suburban. Smith sold the house and its remaining land to William Clum who lived in the house for 10 years. Clum was probably related to John P. Clum, an agent in the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs, former mayor of Tombstone, friend of Wyatt Earp, and the man who reportedly captured the prominent Apache leader, Geronimo. Former

friends and family members have recounted the story that Geronimo's gun was kept over the mantle in the house when Clum lived there. The current owners purchased the house from the widow of the businessman and banker, Robert Lynch, who owned the house for more than forty years. Lynch and his widow further reduced the size of the property from 23 acres to the present approximately 2.5 acres.





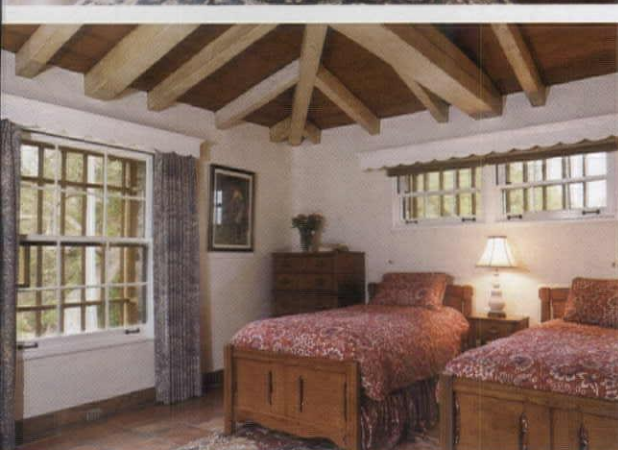
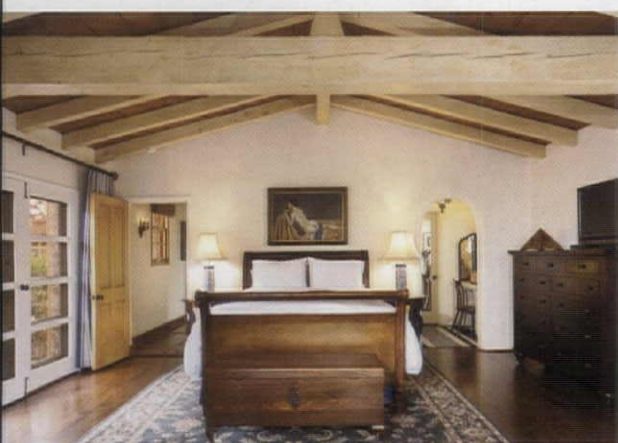
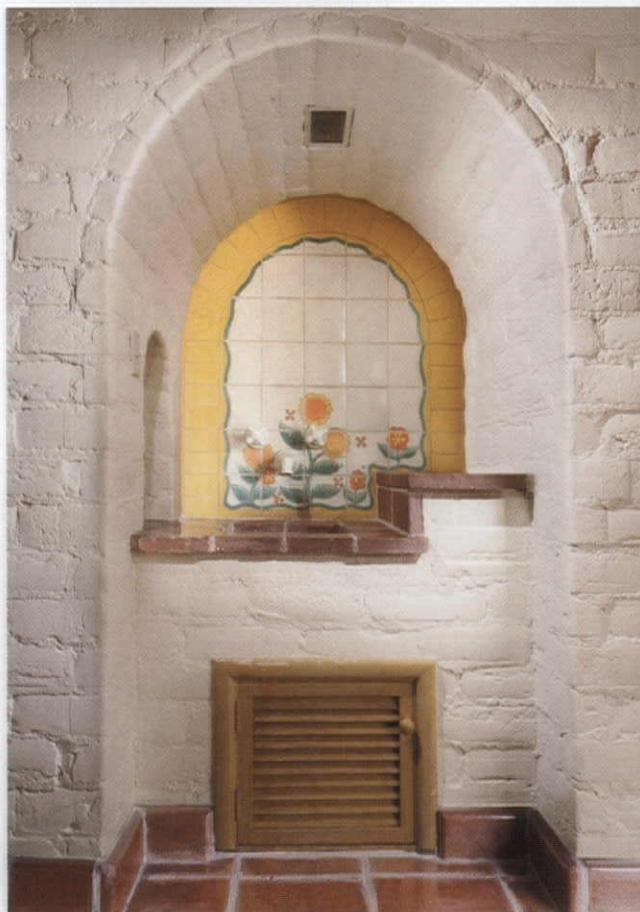
The house today still evokes the romance of May's original design. The texture of the materials, the flow of the rooms around the patio and loggia, and the distant hills remain. There have been changes over the years. A swimming pool was added in the mid-1940s. Cliff May remodeled the house slightly for Clum in 1953. The aviary, part of May's original design remains today, though filled with plants instead of birds. The original garage is now an informal living room/playroom and new garages sit at the bottom of the property near the gatehouse. What was once driveway all the up to the house is now part of a manicured garden. Nevertheless, this house remains one of Cliff May's most important designs.

In 1935 May moved to Los Angeles where his partnership with Smith continued through the end of the 1940s. With Smith's financial backing and May's designs, they built and quickly sold a large speculative ranch house on Stone Canyon Road in Los Angeles, several houses nearby in Sullivan Canyon, and then, beginning in 1938, the astonishing Riviera Ranch, a development, complete with riding trails and stables, of luxury California ranch houses in Brentwood.



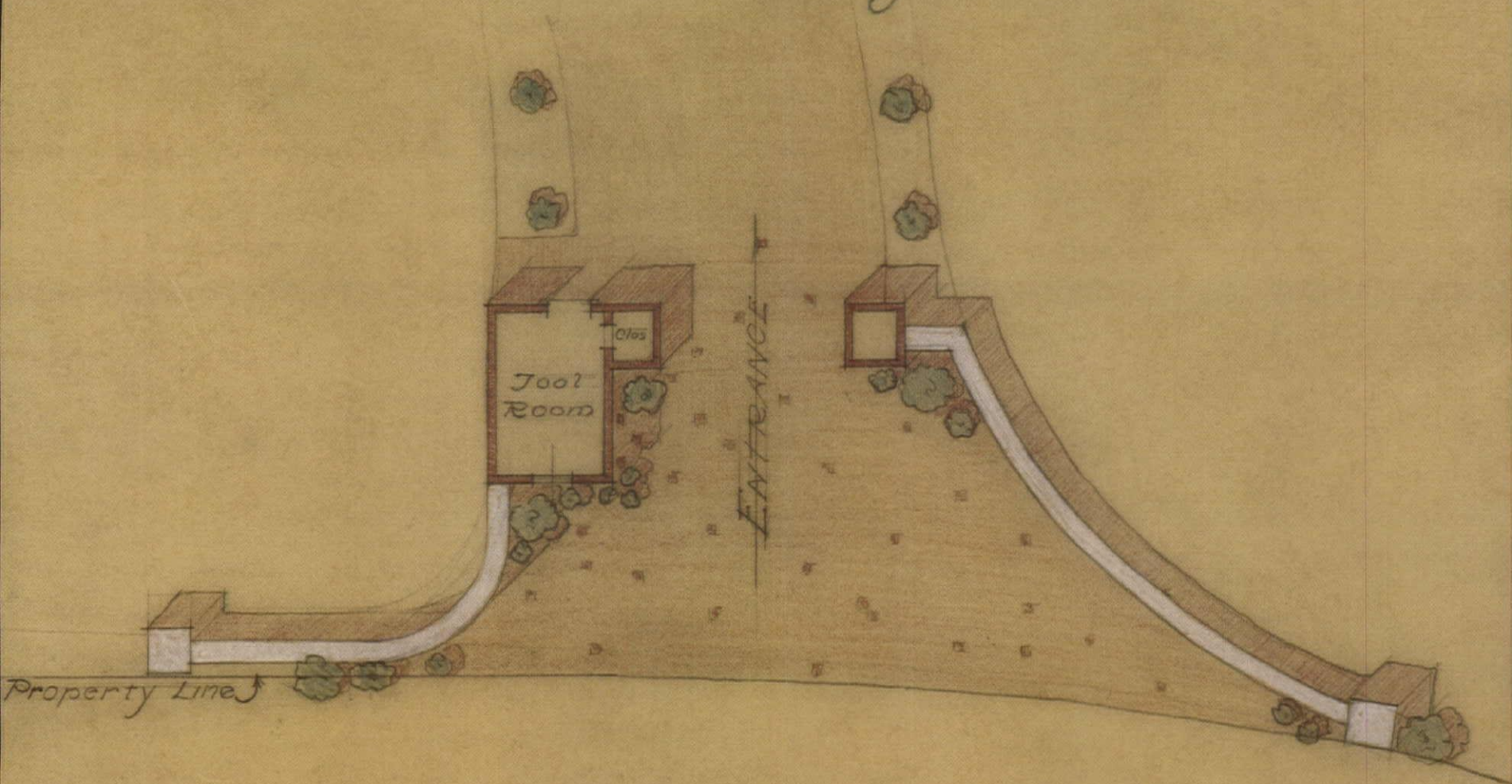
Under the influence of magazine editors, May's later designs were more sophisticated and sleeker—modern interpretations of the California ranch house—culminating in Mandalay, the 6,000 square foot house he built for himself, beginning in 1956, at the top of Sullivan Canyon, just outside the Riviera Ranch. The California ranch house made Cliff May famous. He built houses around the country and in other parts of the world but stayed in the Sullivan Canyon area for the rest of his life. He died at his office in Riviera Ranch in 1989.

The romance of the California ranch house continues to have great appeal. Many of May's designs remain and are lovingly cared for in Santa Barbara, San Diego, Los Angeles, Malibu, Brentwood, Camarillo, and in the City of Lakewood where the largest tract of low-cost ranch houses, Lakewood Rancho Estates, designed by May and his partner Christian Choate, was built by the developer Ross Cortese, between 1953 and 1955. Cliff May believed that everyone should live in a ranch house.





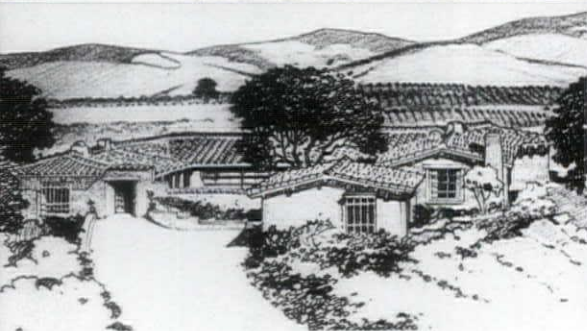
" — Entrance - Gate — "



Property Line

Edge of Pavement

WALNUT STREET

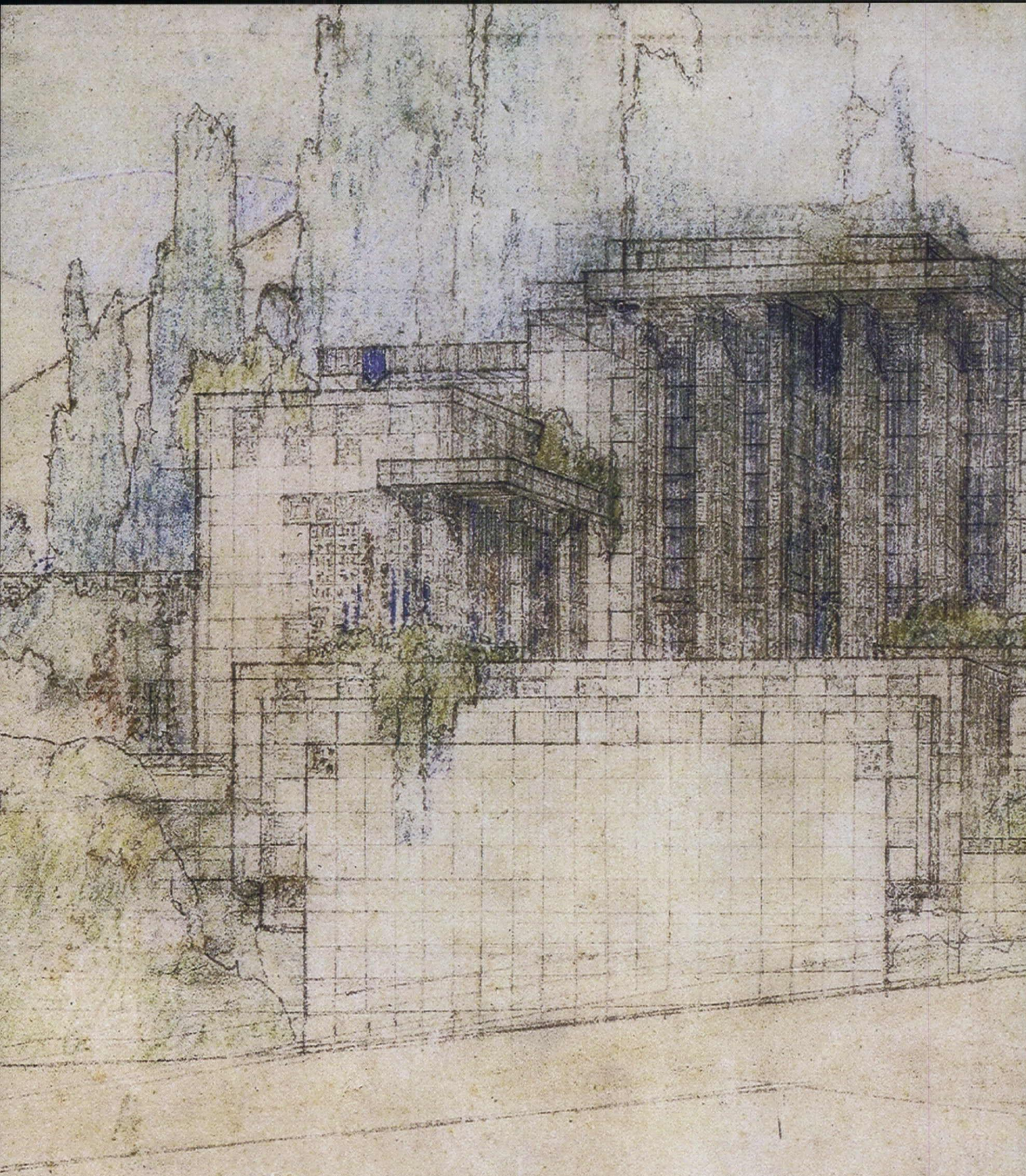


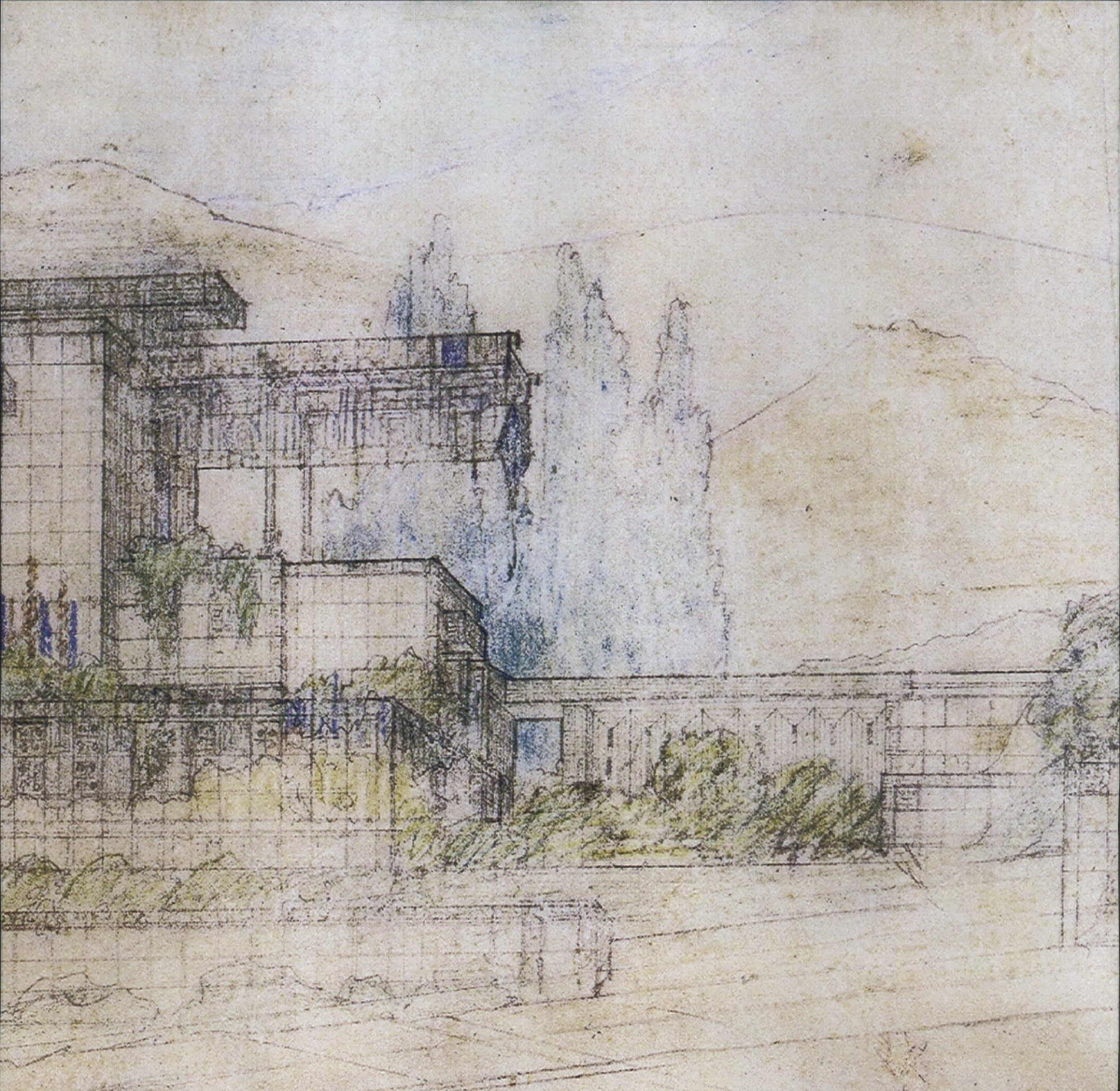
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All Color Photography By: Cameron Carothers

Details & Information at: cliffmayhacienda.com





A Palace For Everyday Living

Hollywood, California

No. (1921)

Storer house too



The John Storer Residence, 1923

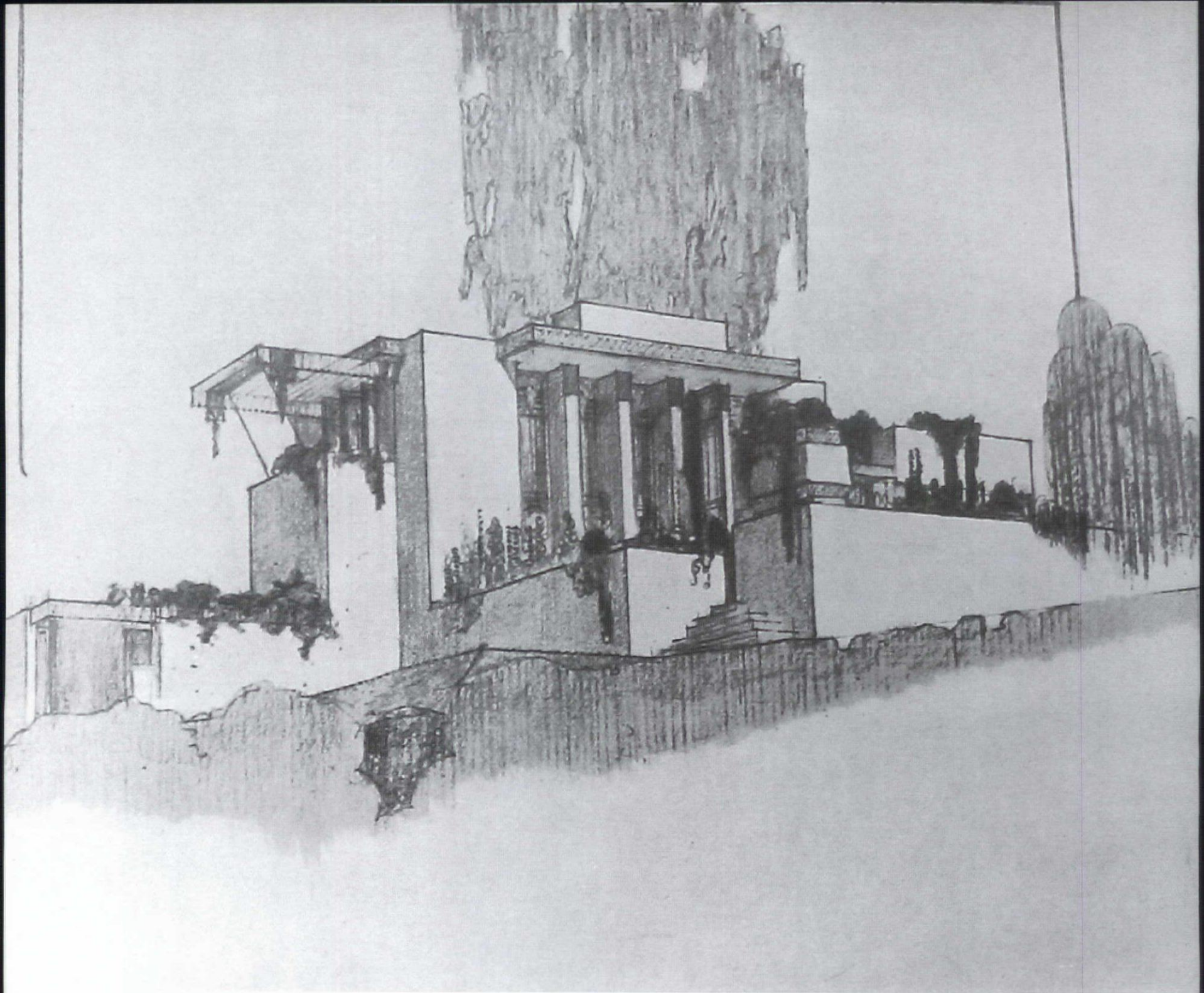
"Frank Lloyd Wright . . . creates architecture as a plastic whole and perceives the new spiritual forces working in the inner being of the masses, in the abstract form." — TH. Wijdeveld 1925

BY NICHOLAS OLSBERG

The Storer house is one of four homes, built at almost the same time, in experimental textured concrete block. They were an effort by Wright to develop a building system in a single structural material that would fit the emerging landscape of Los Angeles, to which he had moved his practice on returning from Japan with the completion of the Imperial Hotel. It was designed in the fall of 1923 on the basis of an abortive plan for a standard California city house for Lowes. It was built in the following year, and occupied in October 1924, though never, until a major and impeccable restoration in the 1980s by Wright's grandson, completed to the level of refinement and detail planned. Now, however, it stands

as one of the most successful and durable restorations of a Wright masterpiece, and — conceived for a relatively conventional household and on a still highly desirable lot — one of the most livable and romantic. Immediately taking its place as a major step forward in the literature of the day, including Neutra's 'Wie Baut in Amerika', Storer illustrates the two critical and most widely recognized features of Wright's achievement at the time: what one great architect of the time, Robert Mallet-Stevens, called his "mastery of volume at play in space," and another, JJP Oud, called his unrivalled ability to achieve "unity of conception in the whole and in details."





Detail of Wright's perspective drawing for the Lowes House, signed at Taliesin in December 1922, a project cancelled shortly before the start of his design for Storer House. Shown as he published it in the Dutch journal *Wendingen*, 1925

The Storer House is the central chapter in the story of a crucial phase in Wright's work. With it, Wright tried to carry into the everyday domestic landscape of the city a richly expressive and newly ordered sculptural language that he had been exploring since his return from Europe in 1911 and that first flowered in the great 'romances' (as he called them) of his own Wisconsin home at Taliesin, Chicago's Midway Gardens, the Barnsdall colony for Los Angeles' Olive Hill, and Tokyo's triumphant Imperial Hotel.

Historians have dwelt heavily on Storer House as an example of Wright's newly invented 'textile block' system. This unusual material, and the structural language it represents, were certainly integral to the endeavor. The use of textured and pierced blocks is still persuasive, as a way to seize and manage the extraordinary qualities of California light and to make a native fabric for California buildings that, like the adobe bricks that came before them, would use the ground on which the houses sat to produce the matter from which they were made. But the blocks were never the purpose of Wright's experiment. They were an attempt to find the economic means to reach a wider aesthetic goal.

It is clear from the growing documentation of Wright's practice in his Los Angeles years and of the ways in which he described it later that Storer was intended for something much larger. Wright was in fact working (and himself investing) with his client — John Storer, a homeopathic doctor with a fragile practice — in a fully-fledged housing development scheme; and it is likely that they saw this first house as one among a number of linked properties on the hillside in which it sits. It was to be both the prototype of a new form of city dwelling in its own right, and the anchor for a visionary approach to development in which homes, roadways, paths and gardens would be welded into a single, continuous, structured, monolithic landscape of enormous emotional force. Wright saw the house and the extraordinary series of terraces and walls that wedded it to the land as a model for the transformation of fast-growing suburbs that were haphazard, eclectic, transitory and lightweight into something scented with permanence — a solid, coherent, substantial, and timeless garden city.

Wright had returned from Europe with a stated determination not to continue scattering his reformist and modernizing prairie houses into whatever chance lots his clients had acquired, but to re-cast the American domestic landscape by orchestrating whole sections of the city in coherent form. He had first proposed this in published schemes for a quarter section; then in projects — some partially realized — for planned rental suburbs north of Chicago, in which monumental sculptures, roadways, bridges, and parkland were an integral part. He tried again on a vastly more ambitious scale with the prefabricated house designs at many different scales and for varied settings in his famous “American System,” a project that produced quite a number of built examples but that failed as a business in the face of shortages once the US entered the First World War.

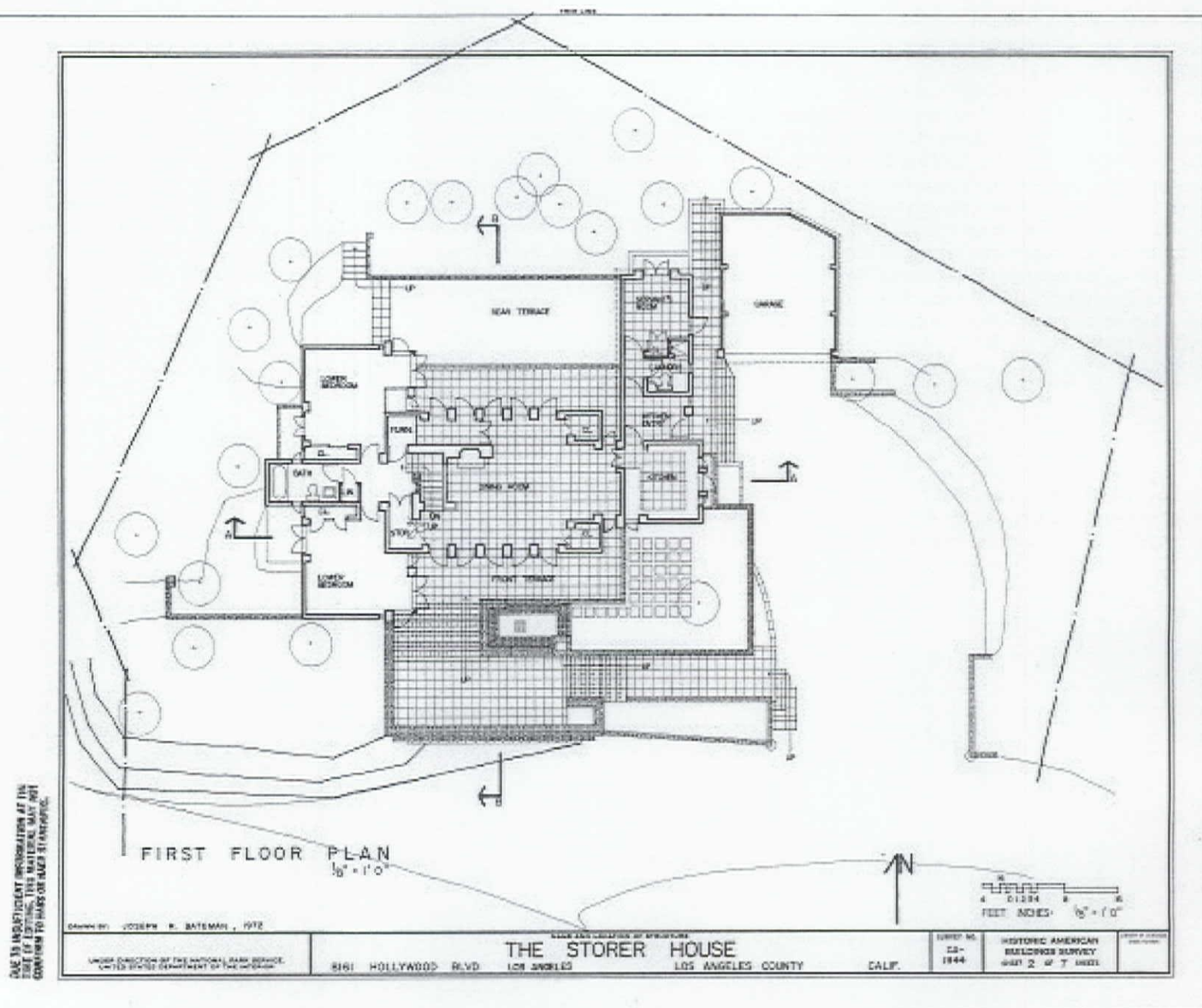
In the same spirit, he then attempted two major schemes for Los Angeles, devoting extraordinary design energy and genius to terraced housing, shopping facilities, studios and a cinema complex on Hollywood Boulevard. This colony, just below the Barnsdall house, was to be built in a mix of poured concrete, stucco and decorated block. Then, on his return from Japan, he began design of a suburb in concrete block at the Doheny ranch. This was a canyon landscape in which houses much like those for Storer and Ennis would fit into the terrain as part of a unified structure of roads, hanging gardens, terraced walks and bridges. Both are sadly unrealized.

Drawings by Wright with his apprentice Kameki Tsuchiura, 1923, just before starting the project for Storer. They show a partial view of the Doheny ranch scheme and a perspective and plan for one of the homes ('House C') planned for it. Published in 1925 in the German monograph he developed with Heinrich De Fries in a pioneering use of color printing



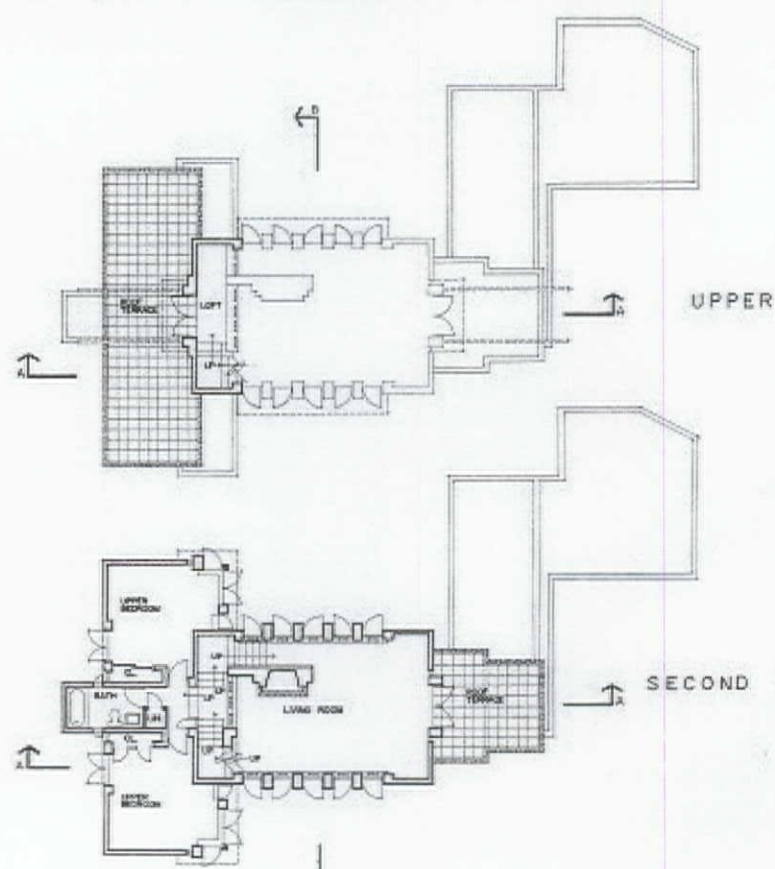
The Doheny project is astonishingly beautiful. Its origins and fate remain a mystery; but Wright clearly saw it as a testing ground for a housing practice that would keep him in the burgeoning city of Los Angeles and formulate a new approach to metropolitan expansion on virgin land. Indeed the Storer site seems to have been the first to be occupied of twelve lots on the steep ‘sky view’ hillside of the Cielo Vista tract; and it is very likely that Wright and his client planned it as the demonstration home for a suite of houses arranged in a unified system — like the Doheny ranch but at more modest scale.

The effort was frustrated. Storer failed to raise funds to complete even this single dwelling to Wright’s specifications, and the contractor backed in and out as bills were paid or not and as the block system tested his capacities. Wright himself made it clear that more was at stake than the fine finish of a single house when he declared its fate a “tragedy,” surely referring to the lost promise of the scheme as a whole. Leaving his son Lloyd to complete Storer as best he could, Wright abandoned the attempt to settle in Los Angeles and went home to Chicago.



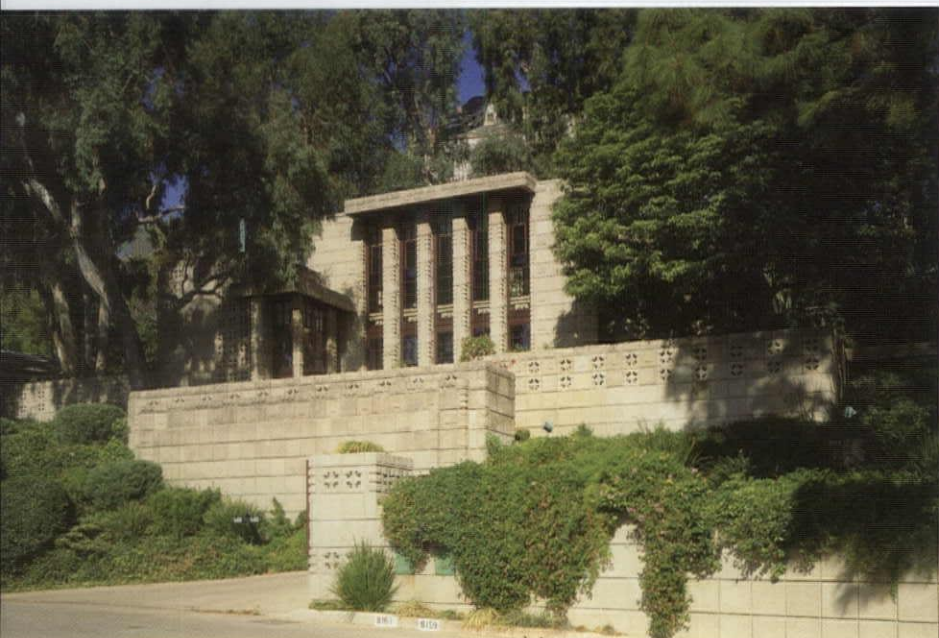
Plans of the three levels of the Storer House, as drawn for the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1972 and filed with the Library of Congress illustrate its compactness. A pool was later added to the rear, essentially completing the landscape to the north, which - as the back of the ground floor plan suggests --Wright had left unresolved.

The Storer plan houses a wing of four bedrooms, a suite of service rooms, a tower of two pavilioned living spaces – the lower one for dining, study and reception and the upper room a magnificent open 'studio/living room' -- and a wealth of terrace space leading up to and surrounding the whole at all levels. In the three other California block houses – for Millard, Freeman and Ennis -- plans are dispersed, functions distributed, and landscapes contained. They open up behind the roads on which they sit. In contrast, Storer has the character of a genuine city house, echoing the walls Wright knew so well from his time in Fiesole and translating them into almost meso-American terms. Like the cities of the Maya, it is set a little up and back in a cubic recession of masonry. And like a traditional city home or Renaissance palace, it clearly and decisively fronts the city and street that lie before it. This is the quality the historian David de Long sees in Storer's emphatic composition of terraces. "It is a strongly urban scheme of concentrated masses; on one plan he noted 'Palazzo!' ... in reference to this."



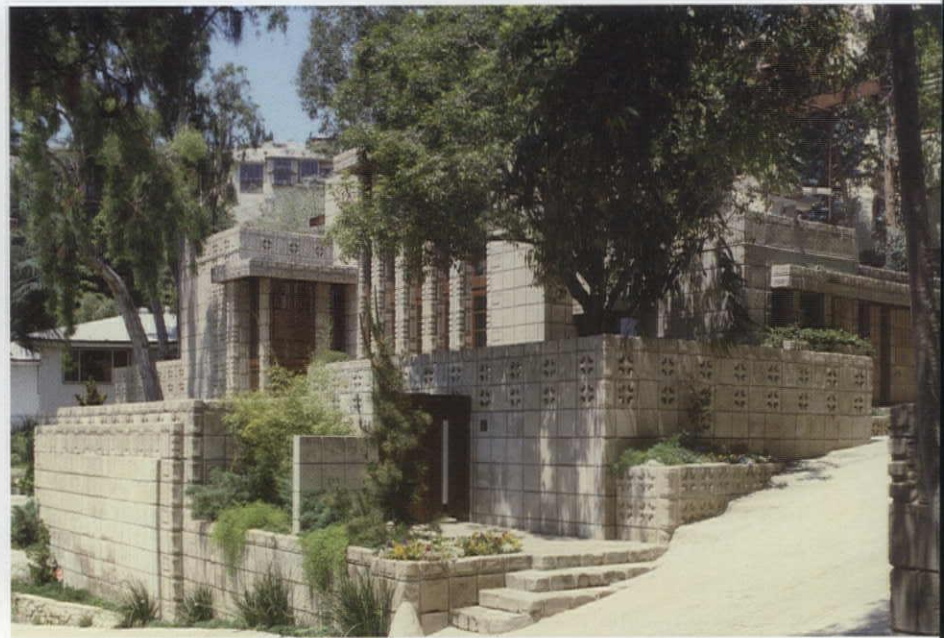
7. The Storer house in the final stage of construction, October 1924, from a photograph by Kameki Tsuchiura

Like any ideal city house, there is a decisive contrast between the approach to the house, its place in the cityscape, and the experience within. From below Storer talks decisively of the coherence and concentration of its form, and screens its interior almost completely from the street. On approach, it opens slowly and still conceals most of its secrets as the path angles upward. Once inside, the experience is entirely different: a compact welcoming area quickly leads to spaces in which the markedly rugged texture of walls and piers play against intensely patterned light screens (there are over 90 faithfully re-created art-glass windows). This dialogue between open and closed, opaque and translucent, somehow makes spaces that are continuous with the light, the city, and the vistas, as terraces open on all sides. There is a marvelous balance between openness to the world beyond and a richly protective shell from which to enjoy it.



Wright had introduced some of the same ideas to an earlier scheme for a "model city house" for Frederick Bogk in Milwaukee, designed just as he left for Japan five years before. He had adopted them again at the Allen house in suburban Wichita. Bogk and Allen both have the same discreet approach to entry and to the first steps inside the home; the same strongly protective fronting to the street; and the same success in opening the rooms behind to light, height, and openness.

To achieve this, Storer develops two other powerful ideas that had been evolving in Wright's work in the previous fifteen years. One is the construction of an emphatic central columned frontispiece set on a solid base as the anchor about which to organize a complex composition. We see this in the tiny model of a city house in his 1914 exhibition; at the Coonley Playhouse; and in the rising central section of the Imperial Hotel, around which Wright spins a vast and complicated scheme.



The other key concept is the reduction of the principal space to a rectangular pavilion, open to the light on both long sides. It is a strategy we see, pitched low and horizontally, in the projecting second floor of the Robie House, in the separate living room wing at Allen, and standing nearly free in the Little House living pavilion, now reconstructed at New York's Metropolitan Museum.

Storer uniquely and brilliantly doubles this idea up, laying out two distinct layers of columned pavilion space that lie on top of one another, and then raises the ceiling height of both through rooms, with vertical art glass windows. The effect is radically new: we sense a rising roofless space, contained within a steeply sloping landscape, where Little, Allen and Robie all speak to the horizontal line, the sheltering ceiling, and the expanse of the land around. As with Wright's house designs for the Doheny resort, Storer goes further toward a densely contained formal structure than anything before, and talks to a wider conception.



Both at Doheny and in Storer, Wright was rethinking not just the form of a city house but the shape of the very city itself — wishing on the still empty hills that made up the cityscape of Los Angeles a metropolis that would not be separate from nature but mount the landscape and live within it. It was a vision (in what he himself praised as ‘a land of romance’ but scorned for its want of history) of continuity, timelessness and flow -- within the house, in its connection to its outside spaces, and in its relation to the larger world around it. This was what the young Harwell Harris would recognize when seeing Wright’s Barnsdall project for the first time, noting that he was “impelled . . . to follow its development,” for “it was sculpture on a completely different scale, and I simply couldn’t stand still . . . As the building moved, I moved.”

In contrast to this compelling sense of continuity and flow, De Long talks of a number of consciously “discontinuous elements,” like the rhythmic lines of columns in the two living spaces that break the boundary between inside and out and the constantly changing floor and ceiling levels of the transitional spaces, which vary the experience and pace of moving through. In the same way Wright interrupts the two great rooms with a hearth, and — in a gesture taken from Japanese traditions — puts no great emphasis on the main entrance, the stairways and the turning points inside the house.



All these are carefully placed off center, unemphatic, even uncertain. The resulting informality, with its choice of pathways, loosens up a home whose crusty materials and dense massing could otherwise make it ponderous and solemn. A number of other ideas reinforce this idea of blending the substance and solidity of a palazzo with the lightness and good spirits of a modern home: the way the high French windows simply rise to meet the ceiling serves to “amplify the openness they celebrate,” in De Long’s words; the multi-colored geometric patterns that are painted under the soffits to soften the fall of light; the carnival features that shelter the two upper terraces and make them merry.



Photography by: Tim Street Porter

Wright saw his block houses as the steps on the road to a new kind of modernity, in which the 16 inch square blocks themselves – made of crushed granite and rebar – would marry industry and nature, the decorative and the practical, the handmade and the mass-produced. Yet there are aspects of the house – its denseness, the richness of its material palette, the monumental sturdiness of its street-side terraces, its intensely managed plays of light and shade, its complex passage from level to level and room to room, its sense of the palazzo – that carry echoes of more archaic worlds, and of deeper, more psychic structures and spaces than the plainness and evident rationality of later, Mid Century Modernism. As such we can look at Storer as a very rare American example of other more expressive ‘modernisms’ that were appearing in the Twenties, as the world sought a return to order after a cataclysmic conflict. In the same way Wright himself, in the face of the catastrophic tragedy that had destroyed his first Taliesin and the beloved family within it, was looking not just for freedom and modernity but for something reassuring, lasting, impregnable and lovely.

Storer is closer in spirit to the sometimes magical sculptural modernisms of that time, in which reason is wedded to the emotional power and spiritual force that can derive from the materials and shapes of a building. Nothing captures Storer’s expression of this magic and its power to enchant better than a tale Pauline Schindler tells, and to which Robert Sweeney has drawn our attention. Caretaking the place in the Thirties, this great critic of design spoke about the grace and comfort of her time in the great ‘studio living room’ carved out on the top floor of the house, and of her son, who in a burst of tenderness sitting there, told her “muv, I love you as much as I . . . love this room.”





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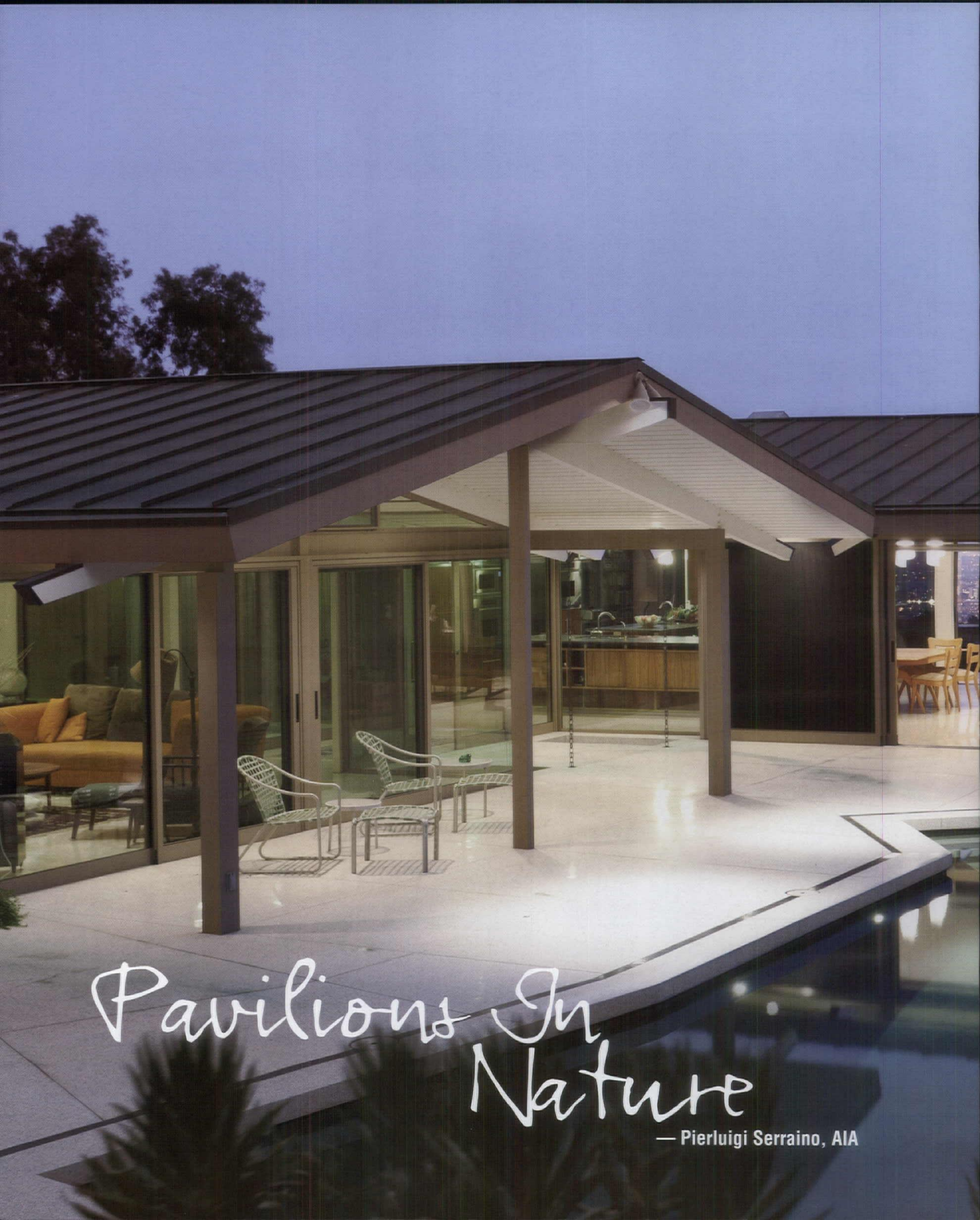
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Pavilions In Nature

— Pierluigi Serraino, AIA







Behind great architecture there is always a great client. It is a known fact. The past ancient and recent is full of such examples. That kind of patronage is both rare and precious. Its scarcity is self-evident in the blighted built environment of our time. In fact, it takes concerted effort and sustained determination to transcend a list of project requirements to conceive and realize memorable space. It is about acting on the understanding that architecture has tangible qualitative benefits in the unfolding human experience. It is also about pursuing the realization of a particular vision over a period of time against logistical adversities. This is the secret of the milestones of world architecture.

The Renard Residence is a paradigmatic example of the client-architect synergy: a serene achievement resting on a most majestic landscape. Everything here speaks aesthetic silence, spiritual regeneration, and healing. Its quiet stillness is hypnotic and transformative: it is shelter and temple, dwelling and retreat. It is an architectural panegyric to the spectacle of the elements. In a reversal to the customary siting of buildings on their land, here architecture is background to nature. But there is one notable exception that distinguishes this feat from similar undertakings. While it is extraordinary for dedicated clients to come by, a chronic predicament many architects lament, it is even rarer to have a client take a leading role in steering the design where the architect left off to actualize its latent potential. The slow maturation of a coherent image of what place was going to be is what singles out such structure from many designs of mid-century vintage.





The current owner, Julius Renard, bought the property in 1999. The original cell built in 1959 carries the signature of post-war architect Richard Dorman, who designed among many projects the residence of former *Los Angeles Times* art and architecture critic Art Seidenbaum and the Playboy West headquarters on Sunset Boulevard. While the Dorman portfolio is rich in glamorous commissions, from its inception this compound was subdued in character and scale, but no less grand in design intent: two one-story pavilions were laid out parallel, yet offset to each other, and connected through a glass link. This earliest parti is a standard solution in mid-century planning on un-built lots in low density areas. Subsequent owners started modifying the plan with ad hoc interventions contradictory to the circulation flow scripted into the original scheme. Over time the accrual of these modifications compromised the clarity of the initial layout.

Upon taking possession of the residence, Mr. Renard learned quietly about the rhythms of the place. The land was the teacher to a student ready to listen to its messages. The cycling of the seasons, the daily breeze going through the house, its ever changing flavors at different times of the day, all conjured to heighten his understanding that in its current state this property was an unfinished project to take on and sublimate into a personal haven. The commanding landscape had maximum impact on him from the start. And although the land around got its share of design attention, it was the house that needed heavy recalibration to respond to the opportunities the natural setting was offering.

Noted Northern California architect Warren Callister once said that architecture is a business of listening. That type of listening for Mr. Renard was a one year affair. Ensuing that observation period, he set to start work on the property with a string of incremental changes guided through intuition about what his house needed rather than a logical sequence of rational decisions. The design concept for the house indeed evolved over time. That explains why for an approximate 3,600 square-foot residence and guest house the number of professionals involved is nothing short of unusual: two architects, one architectural designer, one interior designer, two landscape architects, a structural engineer, two general contractors, and landscape contractor! The house was completed in late 2003 and with remarkable design consistency considering the group of professionals involved.

The structure's physical growth was not linear. It was organic. There were micro-incidents in the process of the transformation to its final stage. Yet, the architecture exhibits cultivated integrity to its most minute details. How did Mr. Renard pull it off? Certain philosophical underpinnings provided broad guidelines for the work to move forward toward a rational outcome. For the owner, this place needed to be physically nurturing and decisively undogmatic in its adherence to the modernist tenets. Through this house, he was interested in promoting awareness in users and visitors alike. It was a conscious strategy to reverse the curse of architecture, typically "experienced in a state of distraction" as 20th century philosopher Walter Benjamin aptly noted.

"Structures reflect our outlook," Mr. Renard remarks. They also mirror our personalities, it is fair to say. That is why the progression of spaces from the entry gate on Woodrow Wilson Drive to the unimpeded linear deck oriented toward the distant Miracle Mile keeps visitors on the edge of constant discoveries. That was my own impression in reading Mr. Renard's individuality. From the street, a finely graveled path gives a cue about a probable destination with no additional information to anticipate what lies at its end. After coasting along a windowless guest house, the car lands on a carefully landscaped drop-off zone. Here a cluster of pavilions gives off a message of unexpected urbanity. Is it a small village? Are these multiple properties? The answer is subtly revealed in the imminent architectural experience. No formal entry unequivocally signals the front door. Instead, it is the intuitive circulation that funnels visitors toward precisely cut floating terrazzo platforms laid out on a shallow pond. Variety and order here marry intelligibility (as well as safety) of use with aesthetic interest. The counterpoint to the consistent spacing of the stones toward the path of travel is the variable alignments of their edges in the perpendicular direction. There is playfulness and rationality in one and the same space strictly defined through the linkages between the various masses. Looking straight into such a highly controlled void your only choice walking toward it is to make a sharp right turn. It is at that point that a complete change in spatial reading takes place.





From a plan layout viewpoint the separation between private and public areas are hinted rather than explicitly stated. In the masterful transition from the public sphere (Woodrow Wilson Drive), to the semi-public (vehicular lane leading to the house), to the semi-private (entry sequence), to the private (master bedroom), the semantic barriers are merely suggested, not physically marked. The glassed entry link connects the living room, kitchen, dining area and den. Keeping the appliances and the cabinetry as the only fixed pieces in the overall architectural composition, the furniture is meant to be constantly rearranged to respond to the mood of the inhabitants, and their attunement to the surroundings. Together with the guest house raised on steps these two areas relate to each other in a courtyard like arrangement around a swimming pool, a hallmark of Los Angeles living. The striking transparency of the house is exhibited in its full glory when standing inside the guest house: sightlines pierce through three layers of glass all the way out past Park La Brea to San Pedro. The perk of being inside the pavilion on the outer edge is the openness of that deep deck where the city is figuratively offered on a tray for the occupants' visual delight.

A common feature of the building components interfacing with the ground throughout the house is that they are lifted up on, not to be anchored. The eyes can follow a continuous shadow line that makes the volumes weightless, light, and immaterial. And it is the erosion of the enclosing boundaries that is the biggest surprise once that sharp turn has been taken. Airflow is the intangible material with ubiquitous impalpable presence bestowing visual overflow. Deep sightlines penetrate the extent of the plan as if x-raying its bodily chassis. Unobtrusive floor to ceiling shades provide privacy when needed. The module underlying the orderly architectural growth is readable, but not constrictive. At first impression this appears to be a straightforward post and beam structure. But its lightness belies its real load bearing capacity. A hidden steel channel is the actual ridge beam attached to vertical members to close the loop, and transmitting the lateral forces to the ground. Dorman's post and beam aesthetic is optimized through a concealed element that affords a column free space in the interiors. Between the generous spacing of the posts and the tapering of the beams supporting a low-pitched gable roof, the interiors glow as they are flooded with luminous indirect light.





The eye travels unencumbered the full length of the ceilings, which invariably feature meaningful terminations at their vanishing points. While the house retains a markedly distinct architectural identity, visitors will likely sense in this space familiar resonances in the design aesthetic. The names of Smith & Williams, Cliff May, and Buff Straub & Hensman come to mind in revisiting my own experience of this house. Furthermore, clear echoes of oriental architecture are readily legible both in the relationship of the enclosing walls to their overhangs and in the tactful drainage of the rainwater through chains discharging in the pond, a well-known technological detail in Japanese vernacular construction.



This is a place to reflect. Each design decision reinforces that notion. The innumerable touches are unfailing in that commitment. For example, linear diffusers are flush with the ceiling planking and retain the same spacing of the individual wood elements; radiant heating releases the building edge from unnecessary (and unsightly equipment) close to the glass line; the panelized glass walls literally disappear as they slide into one position, a detail which is repeated throughout the house; all openings slide, whether indoor or outdoor, and most importantly whether it is a prominent space or a utilitarian one. Connecting to nature is the leitmotiv of this project, where architecture subtly relinquishes its material presence to the surroundings. The indoor outdoor refrain is now common parlance when talking about modern architecture in Southern California. Here, however, this concept has been developed to its richest expression. Technically the entire house can be completely opened and turned into a sleeping porch, thus extending Schindler's intuition for its own outdoor room in his famous King's Road house.

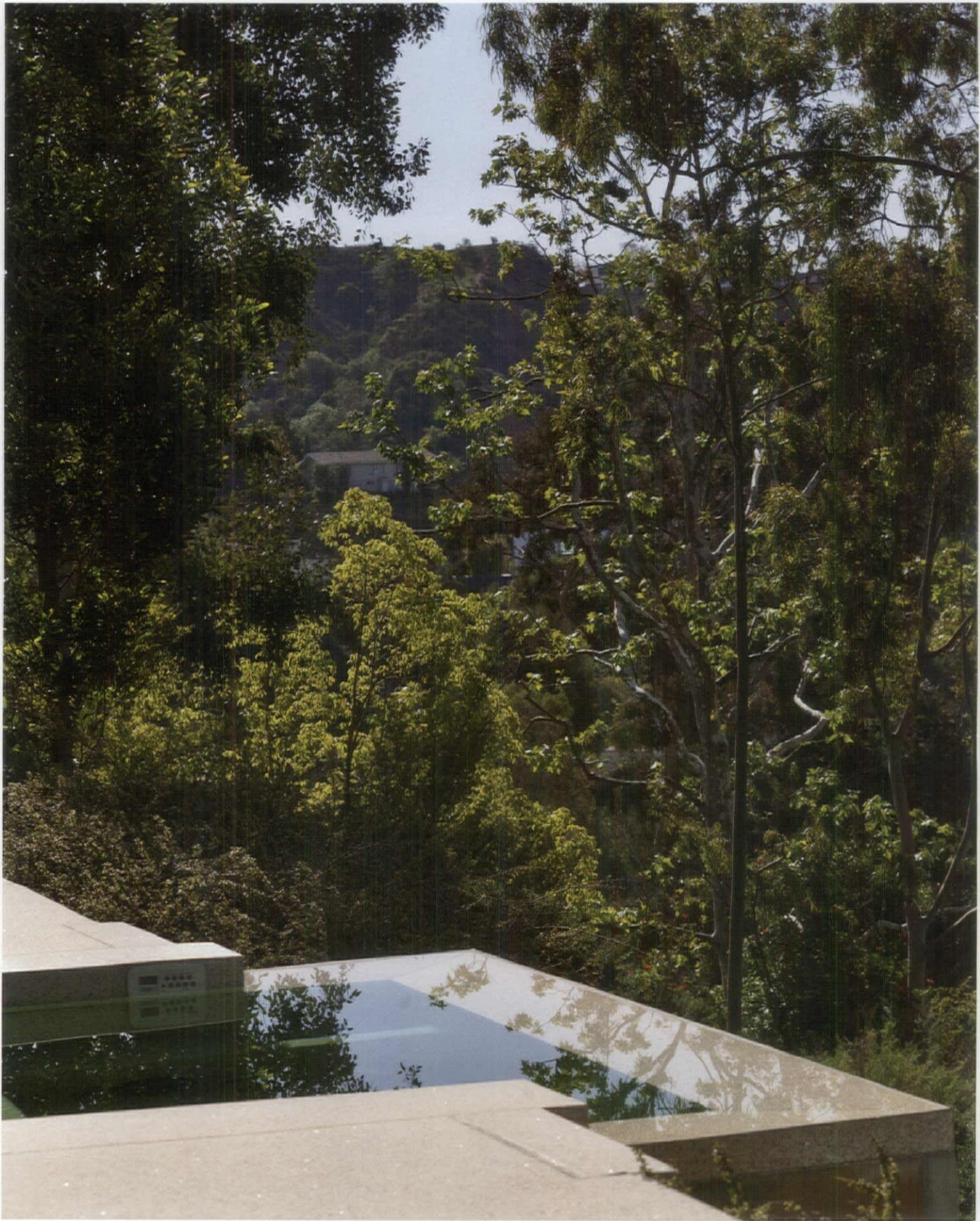




A great deal of care was exerted in the landscaping, dotted with spatial episodes deferential to the contours, and the larger intent to complement the linearity of the house. In taking a descending path, the first encounter is with an Incan Garden nested harmoniously in the natural setting. Meandering paths, whose curvaceous contours are reminiscent of Antoni Gaudí's wild imagination, extend the spiritual dimension characterizing the house into the surroundings. Conservation awareness suggested the utilization of broken terrazzo and concrete gleaned from the demolition of the various house changes to form garden walls along the paths which define areas where to place a chair and become part of nature.

Mr. Renard reminds me that his house was the result of actual group effort: a collective of gifted professionals steered by his untiring search for distinction, and determination that each design move build on the previous. While it might sound cliché to bring up collaboration in the context of any building process, this is the one instance where conception and execution took place through teamwork, with many making discreet contributions to bring the place to where it is today. It is my contention that there is correlation and causation between architecture and longevity. Regrettably, empirical data, and longitudinal investigations to support such a statement is still lacking. But if I were to propose a series of case studies to prove my hypothesis, I would put this house on top of the list as a likely candidate to study.





8161 Hollywood Blvd. – Los Angeles



Details & Information at: RenardResidence.com

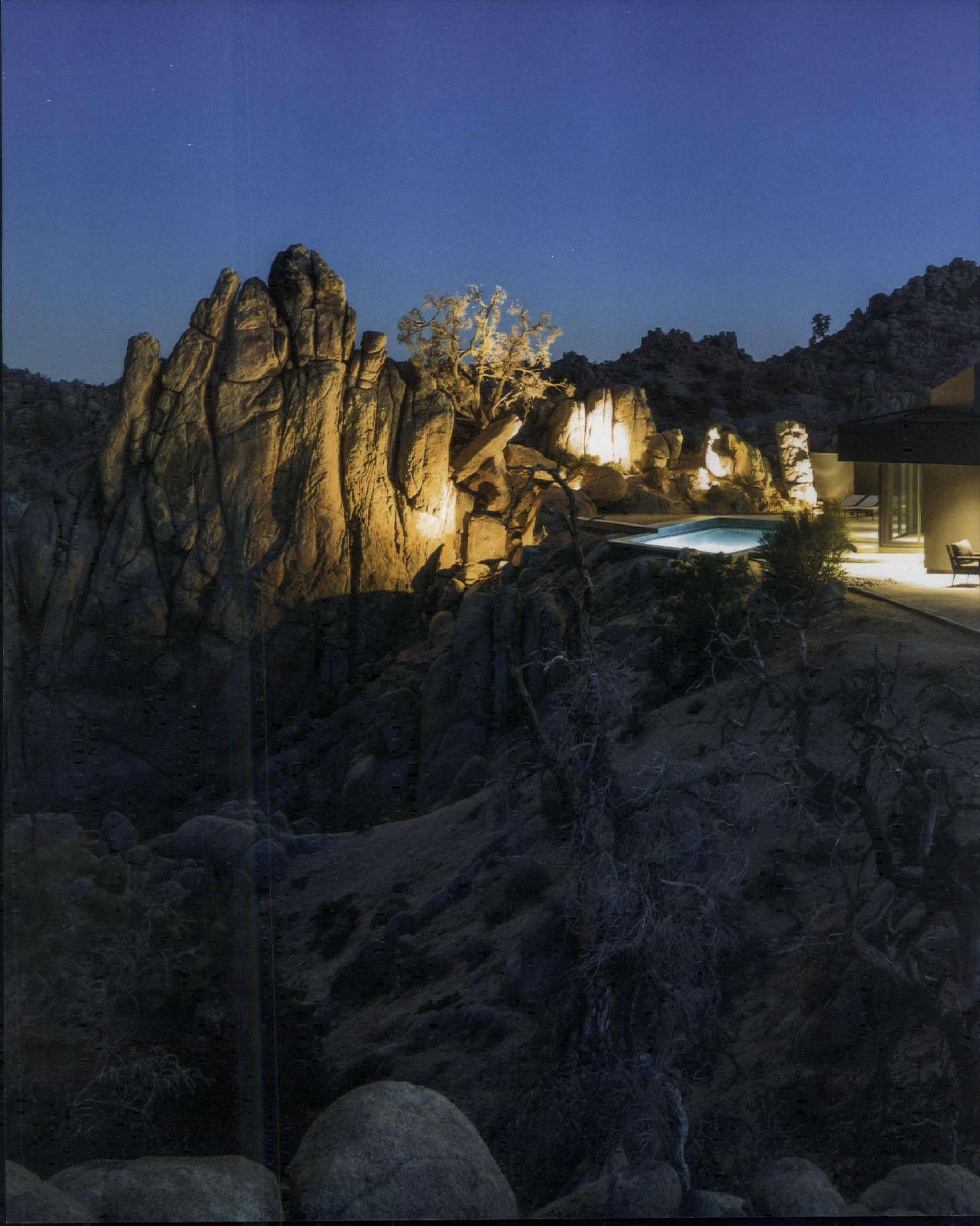


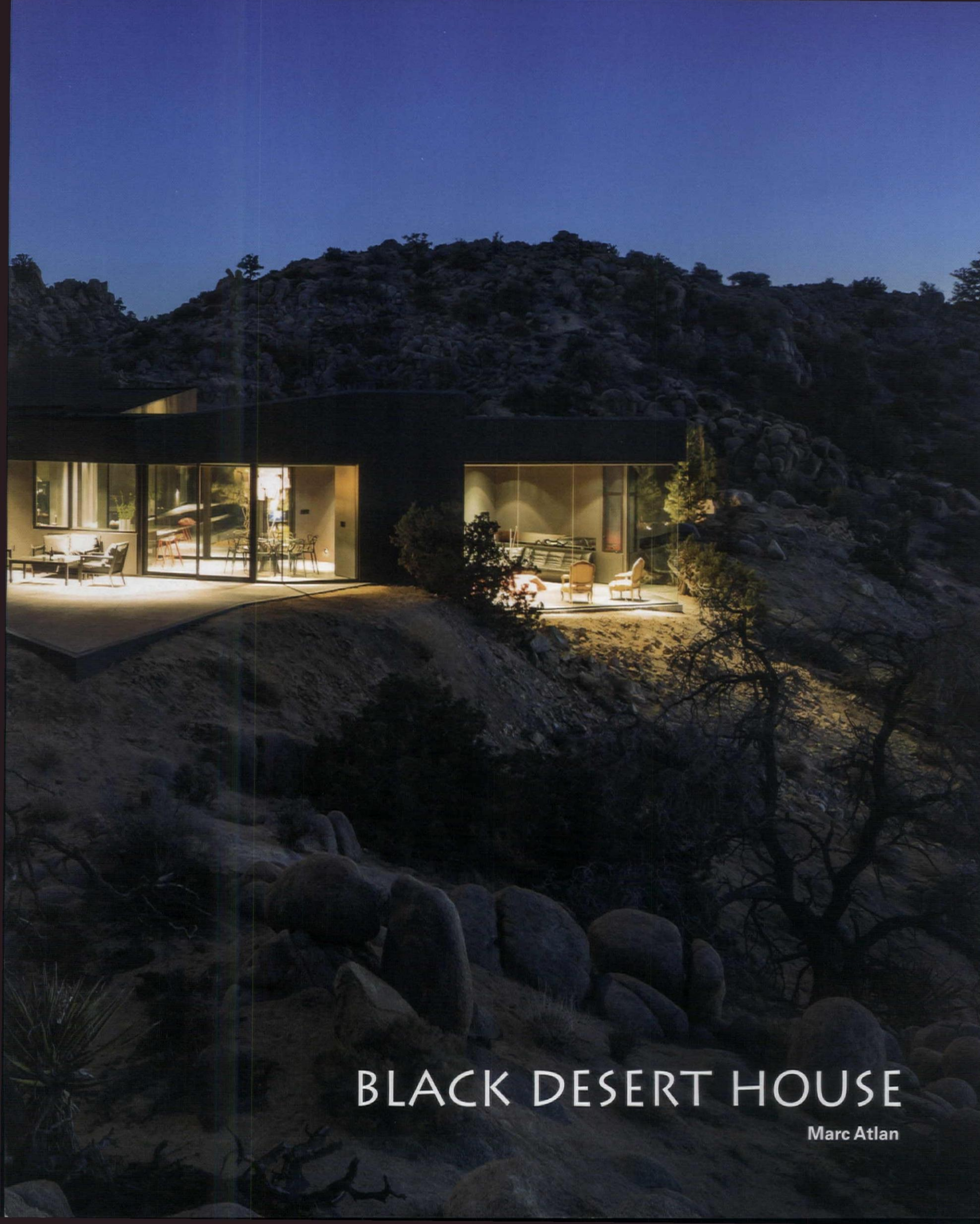
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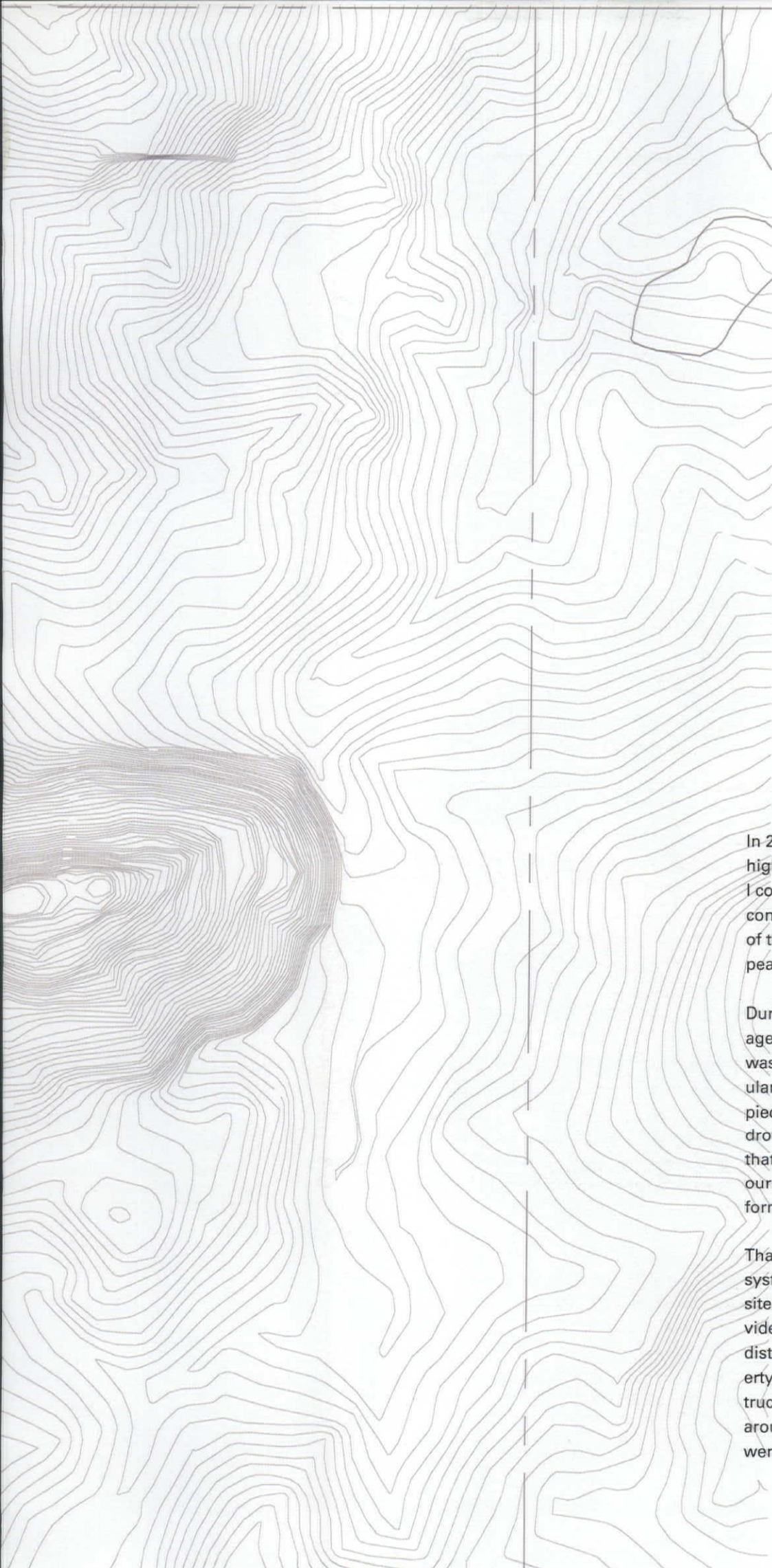




BLACK DESERT HOUSE

Marc Atlan





In 2008, I had the idea to search for a parcel of land in the high desert near the town of Joshua Tree, California, on which I could create a completely unique and radical hideaway. The contrast between the unspoiled, almost prehistoric landscape of the area and an avant-garde 21st century structure appealed to me.

During my hunt for an appropriate plot, I met a real estate agent who spoke of a magical spot she knew of but which was not for sale. As soon as I saw the site, which had spectacular views for miles in every direction, every other possible piece of land was ruined for me. Unbeknownst to my wife, I drove back there, contacted the owner and convinced him that he absolutely needed to sell. A few months later, it was ours. Needless to say, my wife was a bit stunned when I informed her.

That was when the fun started. There was no water or sewer system and the electrical grid needed to be extended to the site. Between finding a spot to dig a well deep enough to provide sufficient water, installing a septic system at the correct distance from not only our well but one on an adjoining property, and the legal requirements for providing access for fire trucks and equipment (which needed to be able to turn around on the property), the logistics of the construction were a true brainteaser.







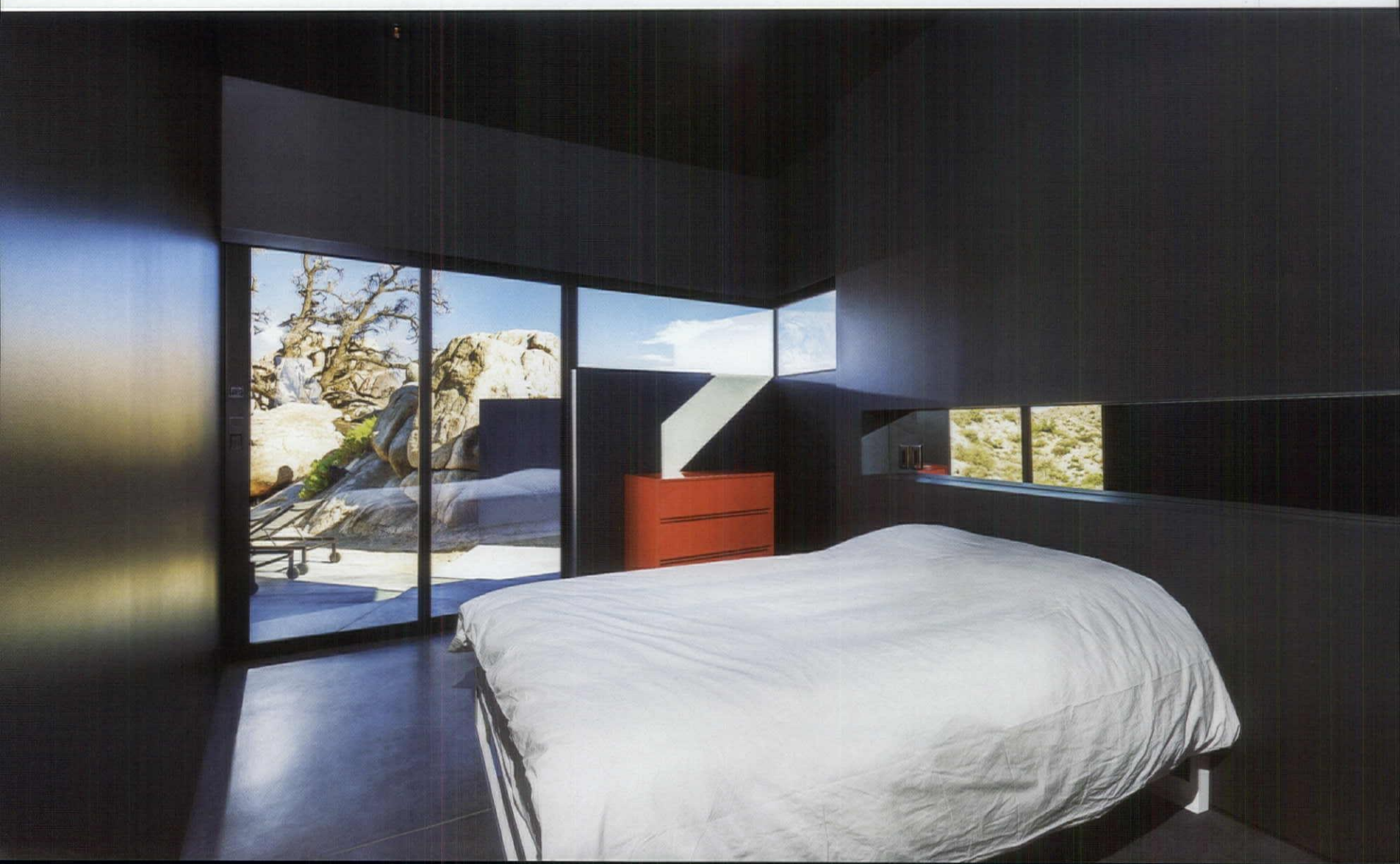
In a lucky twist of fate, I met a wonderful local general contractor, Avian Rogers, who specialized in contemporary construction and poured concrete. She introduced me to the young architectural firm of Oller & Pejic. I now had an innovative and resourceful team to turn my dream project into a reality!

My concept for the Black Desert House was that I wanted it to be like the shadow of a house. I refused the typical terra-cotta pueblo style or sand-colored Mediterranean, both of which I find particularly dreadful. This house would be a glass and concrete wedge, perched overlooking the valley like a stealth bomber ready for takeoff. Each room would be oriented to take advantage of the surrounding beauty which is ever changing in shade, color and light as the sun shifts westward during the day. I decided that the corners of the living spaces would consist only of obtuse angles to emphasize the streamlined, aggressive & severe geometry of the structure.

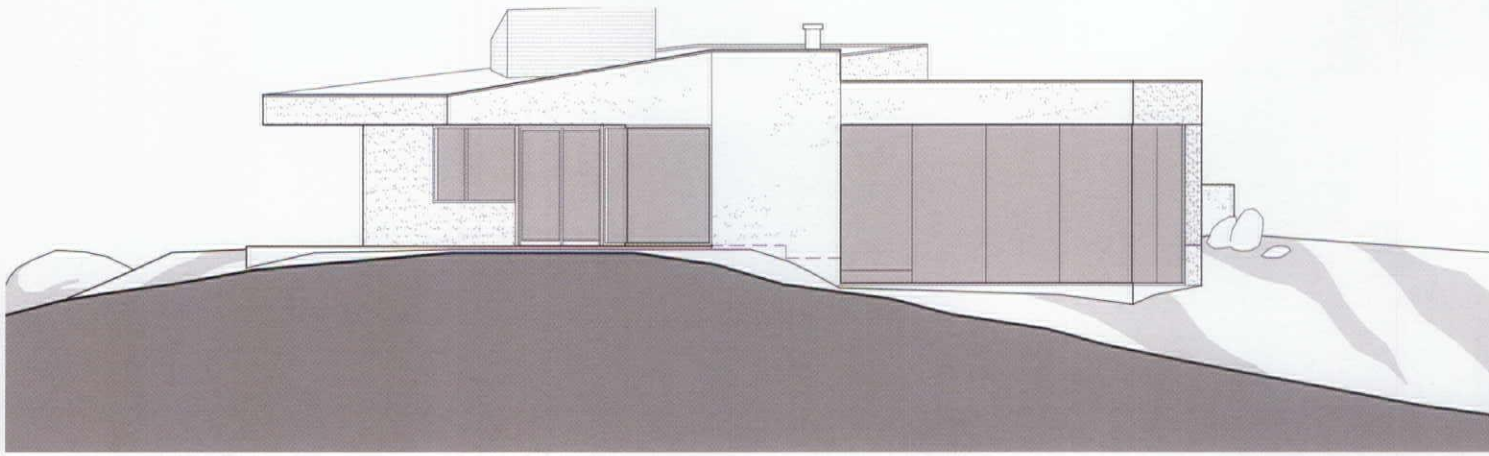


This project took 5 years of blood, sweat and tears to complete. My furnishing choices ran the gamut from unusual '70s designs to 18th century heirlooms to contemporary masterpieces like the faceted Konstantin Grcic bar stools in the kitchen and the Ingo Maurer chandelier in the dining room on which friends & guests who stay in the house write mementos or draw. The ubiquitous black background contrasts with sporadic flashes of vibrant color.

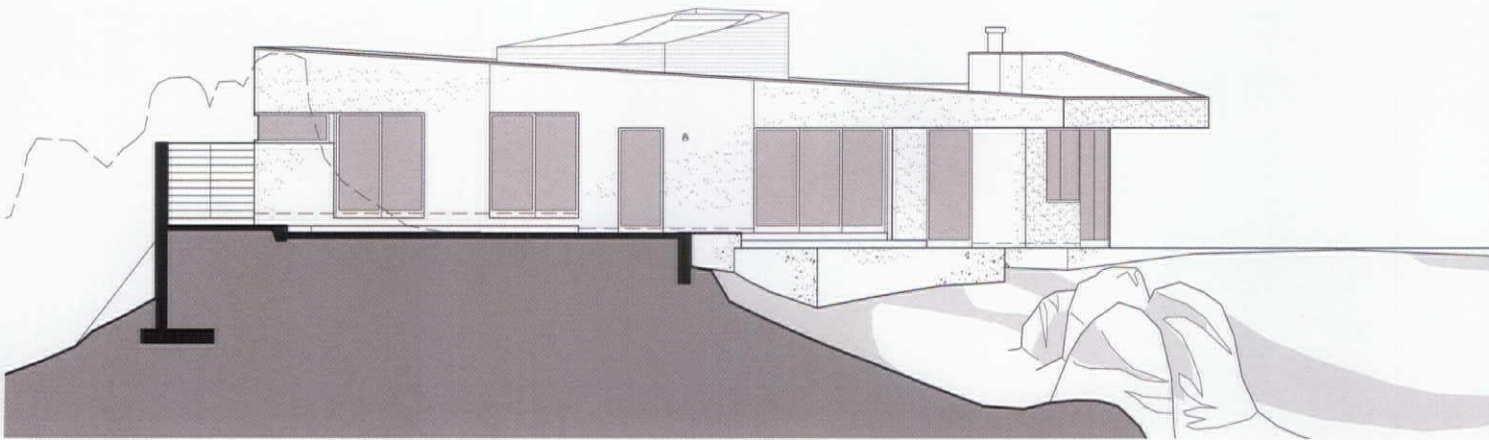
Only an 8 minute drive from the closest town, the Black Desert House feels like it is at the end of the universe, with a silent serenity that is almost spiritual. As soon as I arrive there, my heartbeat slows and all worries and stress disappear. There is no need for technological distraction; contemplating the distant mountains and rock formations for hours is an experience as soothing as meditation.



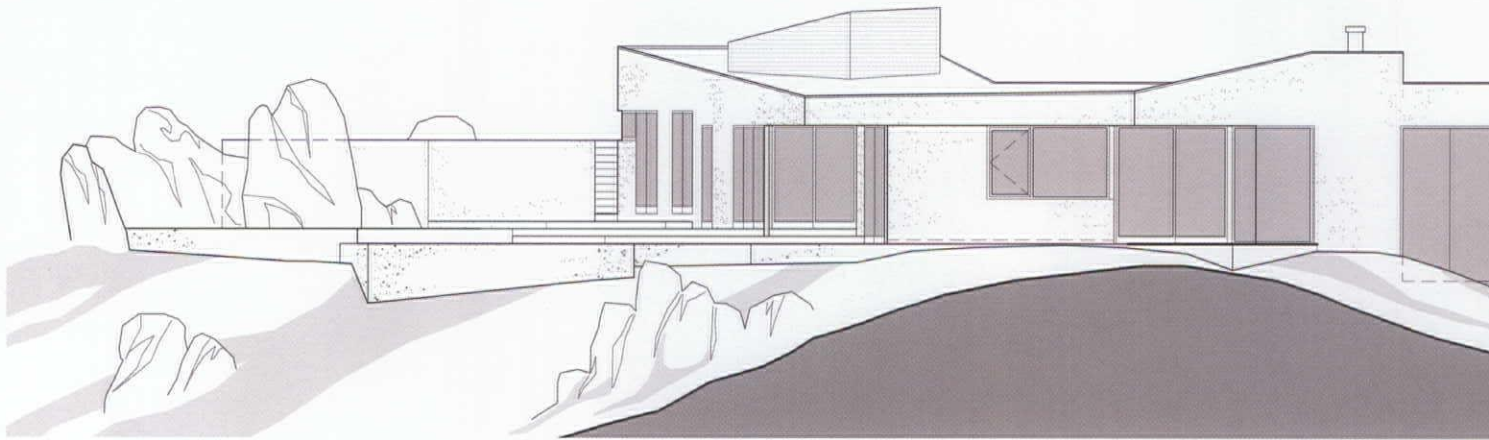




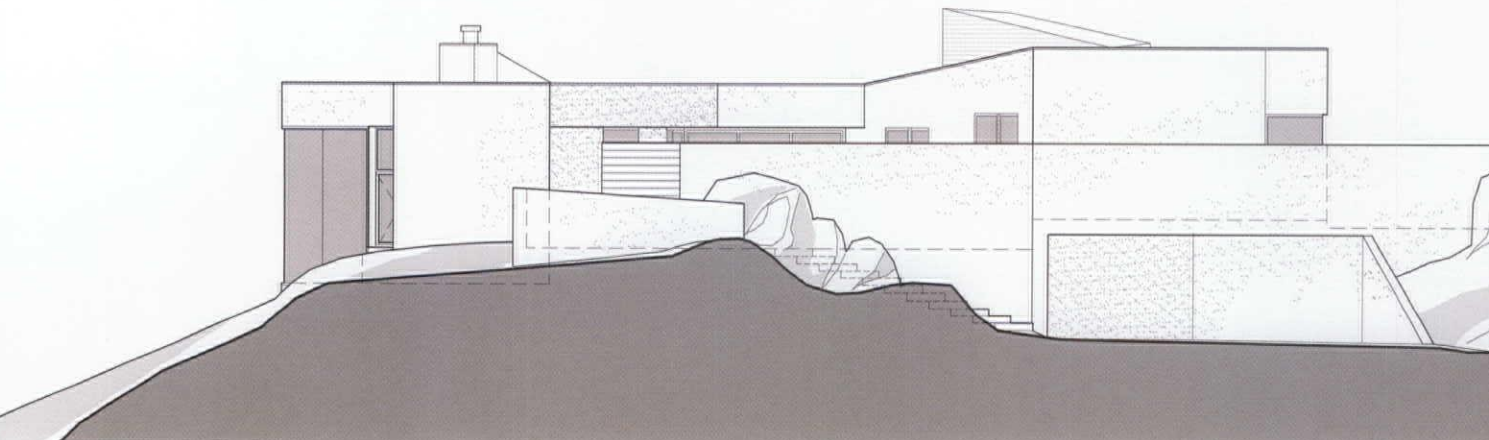
NORTH ELEVATION



SOUTH ELEVATION



EAST ELEVATION



WEST ELEVATION

BLACK DESERT HOUSE

Oller & Pejic Architecture

Oller & Pejic Architecture is a husband and wife architecture partnership located in the Echo Park neighborhood of Los Angeles.

The desert house project began in fall of 2008. The first meeting with the client produced a brief but compelling instruction: to build a house like a shadow. This had a very specific relevance to the high desert where the sunlight is often so bright that the eye's only resting place is the shadows.

The site had been roughly graded in the 1960s. A flat pad had been created by flattening several rock outcroppings. The pad is located at the end of a driveway on a rock outcropping with almost 360 degree views to the horizon and a large boulder blocking views back to the road.

Looking back at precedents for building on similar sites the architects side-stepped the rusty desert modern mid-century routes and looked back to the seminal works of Frank Lloyd Wright namely the Pauson house of 1939 and the Fawcett House for grounding in vast spaces. With the contemporary art movement of Land Art as a starting point, the house would conceptually replace the missing mountain that was scraped away with a shadow or negative of the rock; what was found once the rock was removed, a hard glinting obsidian shard.

The layout of the house was inspired traversing the site outside. The rooms are arranged in a linear sequence from living room to bedrooms, all at varying levels wrapping around an inner courtyard which adds a crucial intermediate space in the entry sequence and a protected exterior space in the harsh climate.

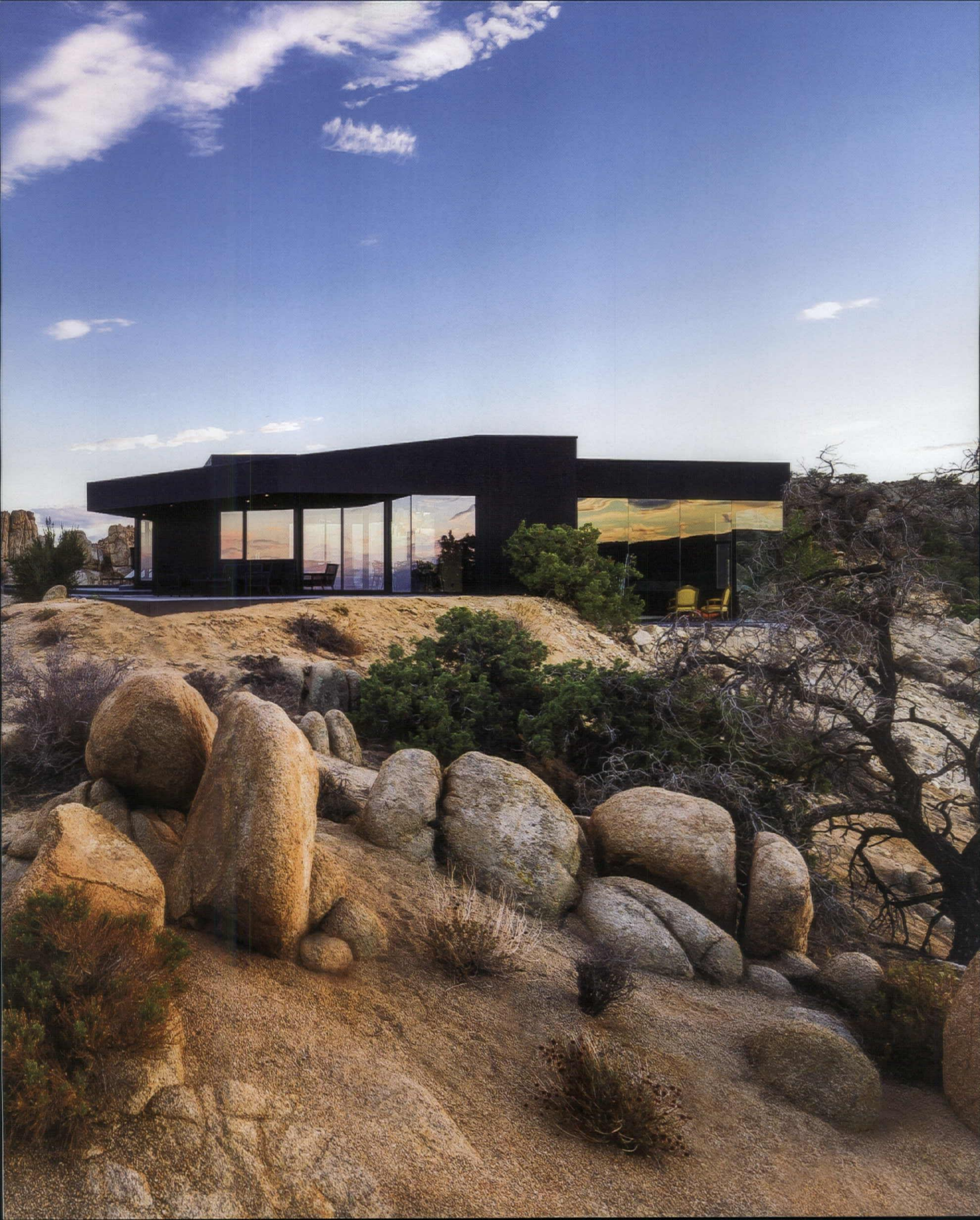
The living room was summed up succinctly by the client as a chic sleeping bag. The space, recessed into the hillside with a solid earthen wall to lean your back against as you survey the horizon is a literal campsite which finds its precedent in the smoke blackened native cliff dwellings of the Southwest.

The dark color of the house interior adds to the primordial cave-like feeling. During the day, the interior of the house recedes and the views are more pronounced. At night the house completely dematerializes and the muted lighting and stars outside blend to form a seamless backdrop.

The dark exterior color was a given from the start and allows the house to visually recede in the landscape. The color doesn't affect the thermal performance of the house, as a high percentage of the exterior wall is high performance glazing to begin, and in the summer months the majority of sun hits the roof which is white. The walls are framed with thicker 2x6 framing members and the house is insulated with sprayed-foam insulation which prevents heat from migrating to the inside of house. At the elevation the house is located, the nights are generally very cool and there is typically snow in the winter.









Yucca Valley, California



Details & Information at: blackdeserthouse.com

on the market at architectureforsale.com™



#752
Pasadena, CA

Frank Lloyd Wright, Architect
\$3,995,000



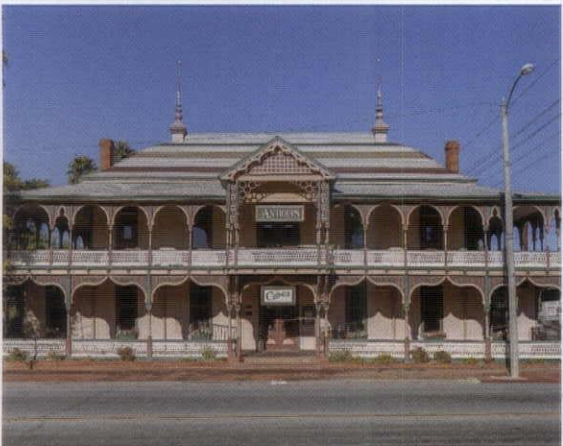
#1025
Pasadena, CA

Greene & Greene, Architects
\$2,845,000



#956
Dallas, TX

Clifford Welch, A.I.A.
\$1,950,000



#955
Lake Elsinore, CA

Frank Ferris, Architect
\$695,000



#1003
Seattle, WA

Tom Kundig, Architect
\$4,495,000



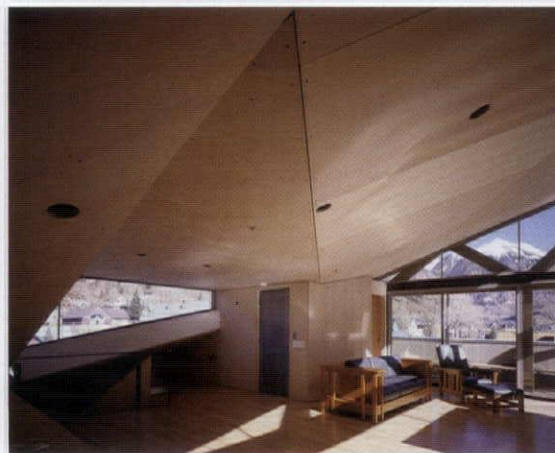
#950
Cold Spring, NY

River Architects
\$1,600,000



#967
Fontainebleau, near Paris

1970s Design Residence
\$2,002,000



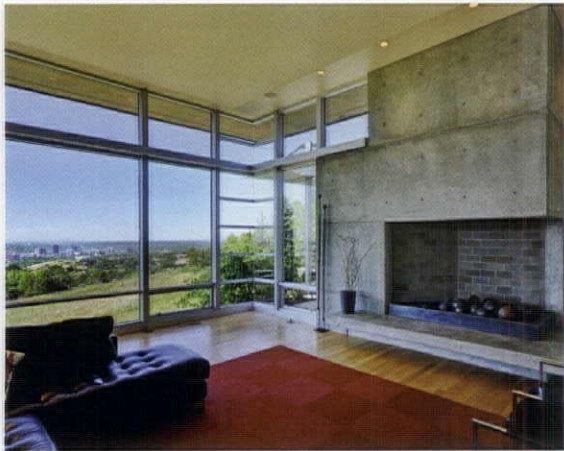
#902
Telluride, CO

Smith-Miller & Hawkinson, Architects
Package: \$4,375,000

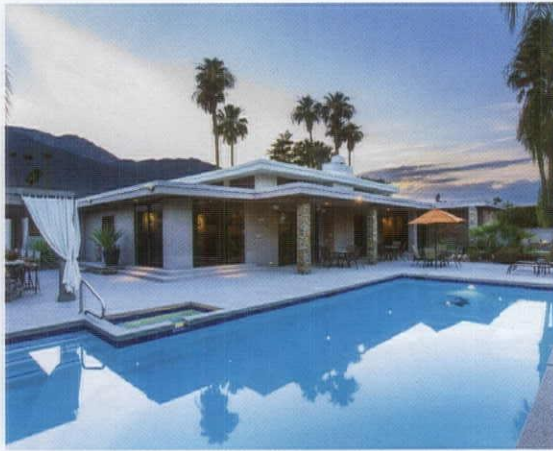


#969
near Bordeaux, France

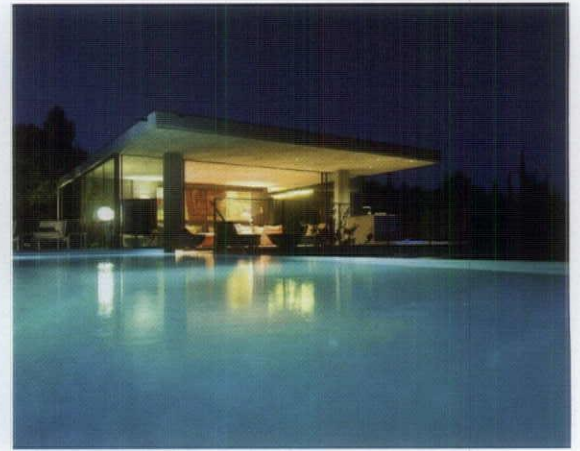
Pierre-L Martin, Architect
\$1,564,000



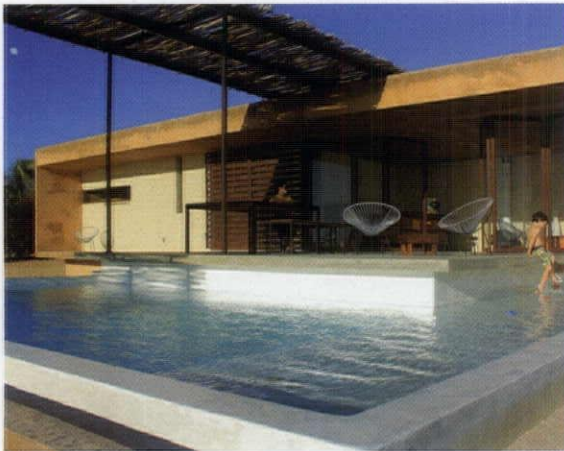
#980 **J.T. Glancey, G. Rockwell & Associates**
Horizon Point, Boise, ID \$2,150,000



#1031 **Charles Dubois, A.I.A.**
Palm Springs, CA \$1,079,000



#970 **Raphaëlle Segond, Architect**
French Riviera, France \$4,902,000



#957 **Gracia Studio Architects**
Todos Santos, Mexico \$479,000



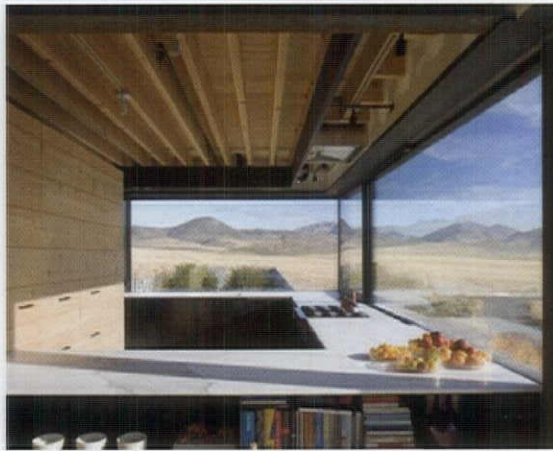
#1007 **Philip Johnson, F.A.I.A.**
Madison, CT \$1,950,000



#861 **Belmont, Queen of Castries**
Saint Lucia, West Indies \$1,495,000



#758 **Allan Gelbin Design**
Weston, CT \$1,588,888



#858 **Olson Kundig Architects**
Bellevue, ID \$2,750,000



#1004 **St. Croix Dome**
Christiansted, Virgin Islands \$1,499,000



The Frank Sinatra Residence
Mountain Center/Palm Desert, CA \$4,400,000



#1012 **Indigo Architecture & Design**
Eastsound, WA \$2,895,000



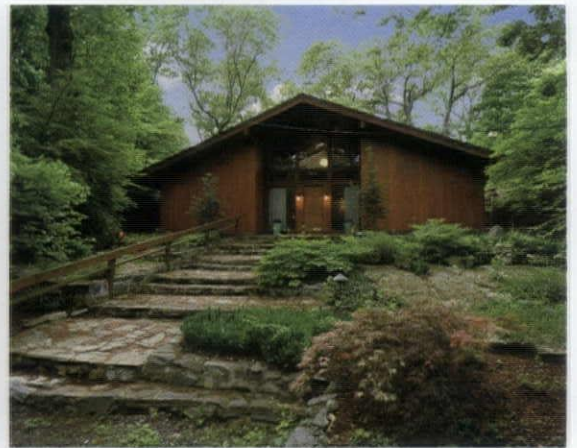
#1020 **Davis Studio Architecture + Design**
Los Angeles, CA \$735,000



#997
Paradise Valley, AZ
Steven Holl, Architect
\$2,400,000



#929
Anacortes, WA
Richard T. Broderick, A.I.A.
\$1,195,000



#1013
Darien, CT
Edward Durell Stone, Architect
\$1,600,000



#995
New Canaan, CT
Philip Johnson, Architect
\$2,795,000



#959
Branford, FL
Valentino Agnoli, Architect
\$550,000



#353
Roxbury, CT
Modern Country Villa
\$4,800,000



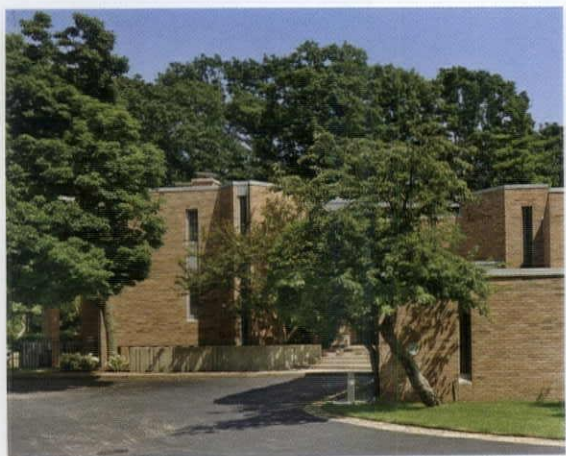
#1016
Stuart, FL
James Yates, Architect
\$4,995,000



#1001 **Scott Hughes, A.I.A. Hughes-Umbanhowar Architects**
Stuart, FL
\$7,350,000



#1014
Starksboro, VT
Malcolm M. Appleton, Architect
\$550,000



#1032
Glencoe, IL
Edward Dart, AIA
\$2,490,000



#987
New Canaan, CT
Ulrich Franzen, Architect
\$5,500,000



#1019
River Forest, IL
Frank Lloyd Wright, Architect
\$1,850,000



#1000 Walter Gropius & The Architects' Collaborative
Brooklin, ME \$2,200,000



#984 Mathias Kauten, Architect
Linwood, NJ \$449,000



#982 Jules Gregory, Architect
Lambertville, NJ \$999,000



#1021 Myron Goldfinger, Architect
Chappaqua, NY \$4,000,000



#1006 Richard Meier, F.A.I.A.
Mount Kisco, NY \$3,495,000



#1009 Philip Johnson, F.A.I.A.
Southampton, NY \$19,900,000



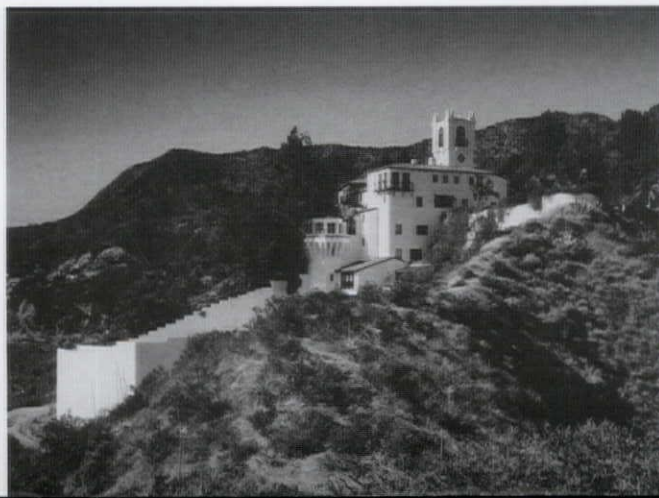
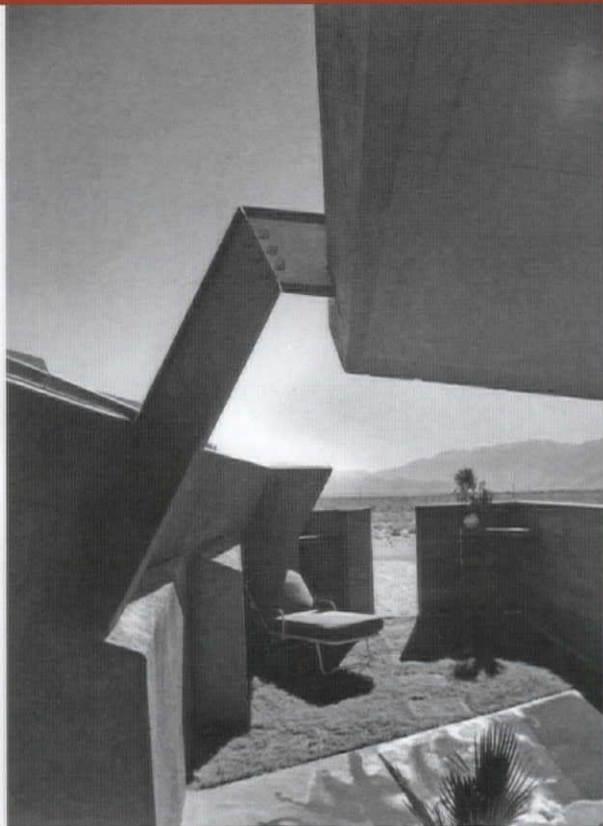
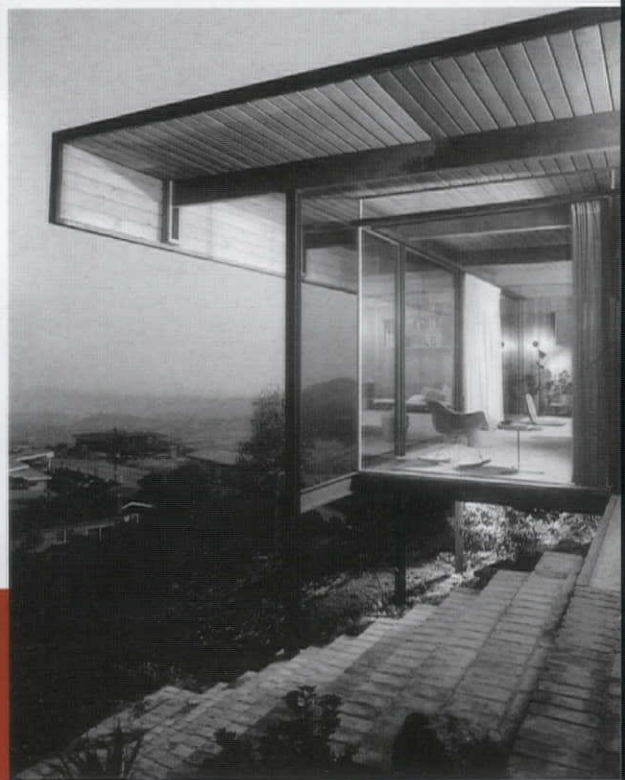
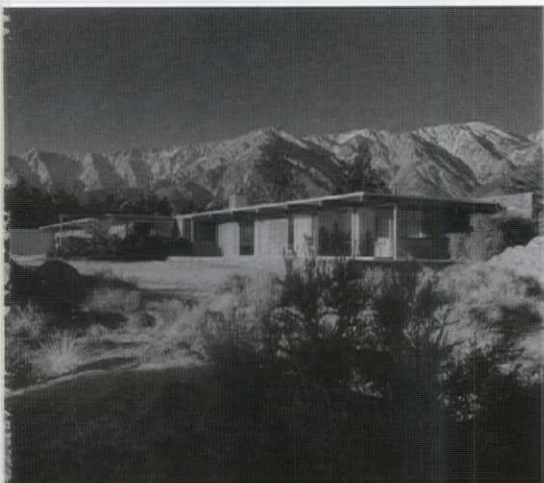
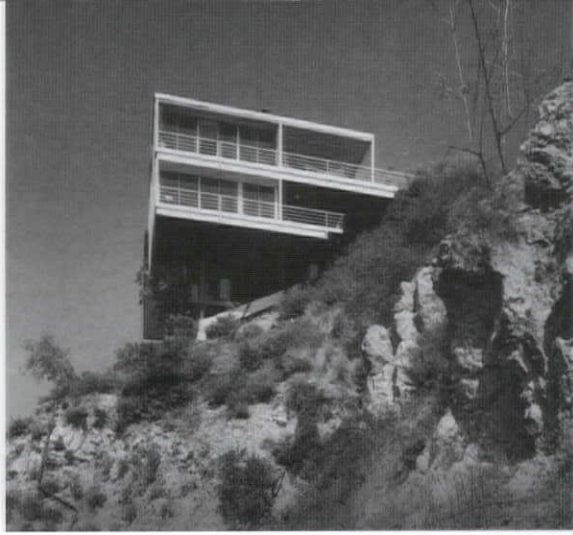
#1030 Richard Neutra, Architect
Bryn Athyn, PA \$5,400,000



David Ming – Li Lowe, Architect
Los Angeles, CA \$1,695,000

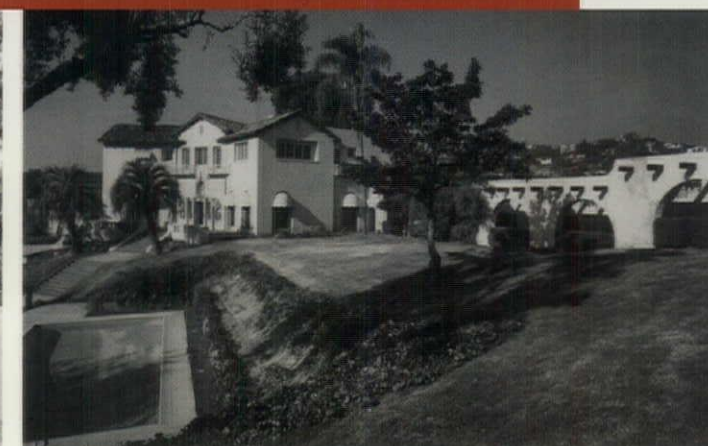


#1029 Lloyd Wright, Architect
Hollywood, CA \$1,900,000





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