

A PASSION FOR simplicity

ZOLTAN PALI'S RIGOROUS
APPROACH CREATES A SERENE
SPACE IN BEVERLY HILLS

Zoltan Pali speaks about modernism with a missionary's zeal. "People think of modernism as hip and new, but it's been around for 100 years," he says. "I look for efficient and elegant solutions. Making something look simple can be very difficult to do. A lot of work goes into it, but it has to look effortless."

That purity of vision is the driving force behind Studio Pali Fekete Architects (SPF:a). Pali is the design principal, while his professional and life partner, Judit Fekete, serves as president and CEO. ▶

Words by Lisa Renaud
Photography by John Edward Linden







Founded in 1995, SPF:a has established a formidable reputation. The firm has played a pivotal role in the restoration of several L.A. landmarks, including the Greek Theater, the Hollywood Pantages Theater and the Getty Villa. But while Pali is committed to preserving the integrity of historic buildings, modernism remains his singular passion. Several of his recent residential projects have established him as a master of the genre.

"I start by taking a rigorous, rational, clean approach to architecture," says Pali. "Through that, I hope that beauty, meaning and poetry will emerge."

One of Pali's most acclaimed designs is the Brosmith residence, a home perched atop a well-known ridgeline in Beverly Hills. "It's my favorite house, I think, because it's the calmest house," muses Pali. "It's serene and direct." Merely contemplating the home seems to have a soothing effect on the 46-year-old architect, who radiates intensity. Completed in late 2004, this modernist masterpiece has been honored with a national AIA Design Citation Award and the Residential Architect Grand Award in 2006. ▸



The home was commissioned by Sean and Hsui-Yen Brosmith. Their previous house, with its cramped rooms and multiple flights of stairs, left them eager for an open, airy space. Sean, whose father worked as an architect with many of the great East Coast modernists, found a kindred spirit in Pali.

Dramatic but restrained, the Brosmith home sits low to the ground, embracing its hillside location and avoiding any intrusion on the neighbors' views. The spine of the house is a long concourse that connects four separate "living pods." This design—brilliant in its simplicity—delineates the home's public and private spaces. Each of these structures has its own breezy courtyard, achieving the Southern California ideal of seamless indoor-outdoor living. ▶







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The family room, kitchen, dining room and formal living room flow together in one continuous, airy expanse, culminating in a sheer wall of glass that captures sweeping views over the San Fernando Valley. An outdoor patio features an infinity pool that seems to slip off the horizon.

In a nod to the wooden homes that Sean loved from his childhood on Long Island, the exterior is clad in teak plywood, with deep tones of honey that soften the bold lines. The teak can be oiled once a year to preserve its warm brown color, or it can be allowed to age naturally into a soft gray patina.

The Brosmiths' young daughters revel in the freedom afforded by the home's network of indoor and outdoor pathways. "Kids can run around the structure without knocking into things," explains Pali. "But at the same time, a space like this can teach children about structure. There is an organized place for everything."

Pali is convinced that living in a minimalist space can have a profound and calming effect. "Modernism is a style, but it's also a lifestyle," he says. "It's about distilling the fluff out of your life." □