



AWARD

## VIEW FROM THE HILL

SPF:a's Zoltan Pali designs a Los Angeles bachelor pad for an industrial designer. **by Anna Holtzman**



After driving up the winding roads of the Bel Air hills toward the Oshry house, visitors arrive at a vision of cool California modernism right out of a James Bond film—a long, white, two-story building interrupted in the center by an open-air court and a glass bridge. This impression of cinematic perfection is bolstered by the near-obsessive detailing of exterior windows, railings, and louvers, the crisp definition of planes, and the rigorously calibrated proportions. Architect Zoltan Pali of Los Angeles-based SPF:a designed the home for Scott Oshry, an industrial designer whose penchant for neatness complements his modernist aesthetic. On entering the house, visitors find that not only do the architecture and furniture conform to a Miesian grid, but so, it appears, does every carpet fiber and piece of paper.

Pali and his partners, Jeffrey Stenfors and Judit Fekete, have a history with Oshry, having first worked with him on an office for his design firm. Oshry is also part of a real-estate development partnership, Habitat Group Los Angeles, which is working on a series of residential developments designed by local architects, including SPF:a. With a relationship already in place, the client had few directives for Pali when it came to building his own home.

The house scheme was initially generated from basic site parameters. First was the topography of the narrow ledge on a steep hillside. The plot is certified fill, so the foundation, which has 16 caissons that are up to 90 feet deep, had to be very strong, extending down to bedrock. To reduce the expense of this foundation, Pali attempted to minimize the footprint as well as the piles, which are placed around the edges of the plan "like cleats on a shoe," he says. Spanning the piles are grade beams. "I see the beauty in restraints," states the architect, explaining

how limiting factors often guide his design process.

The second factor influencing this project was the view. The architect wanted his client to experience the exterior surroundings as he moved through the house. "People always put the best view in the bedroom," says Oshry, "but all you do is close it off and go to sleep." Thus, Pali kept perimeter walls free from abutting interior partitions and pushed most of the circulation, including the stairs, against the eastern façade, a transparent skin exposed to expansive downhill views.

The building is divided into two side-by-side two-story masses clad in limestone and steel-troweled plaster. One volume houses an office, guest bedrooms, an exercise room, and a garage; the other contains more social spaces—the kitchen and living room—as well as the master bedroom. An outdoor court on the ground level and a narrow, glass-enclosed bridge on the second floor link one volume to the other. Oshry says that the design forces him to go out of doors more often, though when asked in which part of the house he spends most of his time, he replies, "the office."

Inside the house are well-edited modern furnishings and more of the architect's fastidious detailing—like a custom wood screen that slides along the master bedroom walls and folds out across floor-to-ceiling windows to block early morning sun. "Oshry is very design oriented, so for the interiors, we participated, but only to an extent," says Pali. Later, he good-naturedly chides his client about a model Oshry built—and prominently displays in his office—of the house Pali designed for him. It seems a fitting metaphor for the give-and-take relationship between this architect and client. ■



Louvers on the east façade of the Bel Air residence are made of limestone. Architect Zoltan Pali told the contractor, who had never before installed stone louvers, to “think of them as a bunch of countertops” (facing page and above). The glass-enclosed second-story bridge takes advantage of expansive, downhill views (below).







Visitors first approach the house's south façade along a path of concrete pavers and small stones (above). Exterior stone louvers provide shade and diffuse light within (below left). At the rear of the building, a wall is perforated by slender, vertical windows that let in natural light but protect the client's privacy from his neighbor to the west (below right).

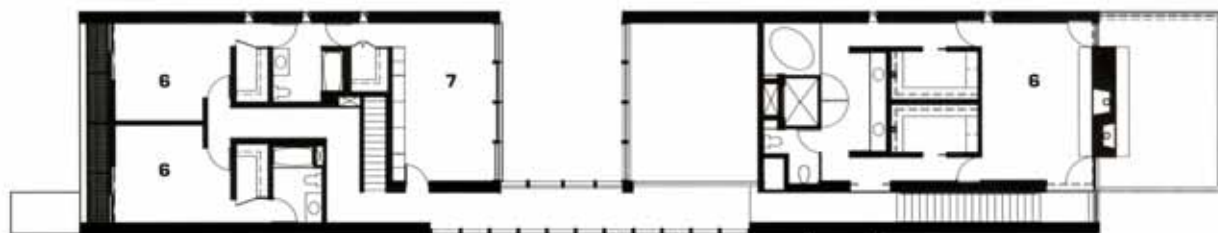




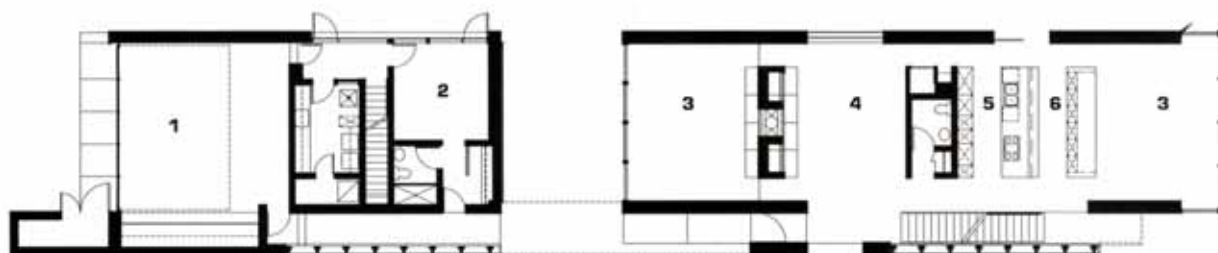


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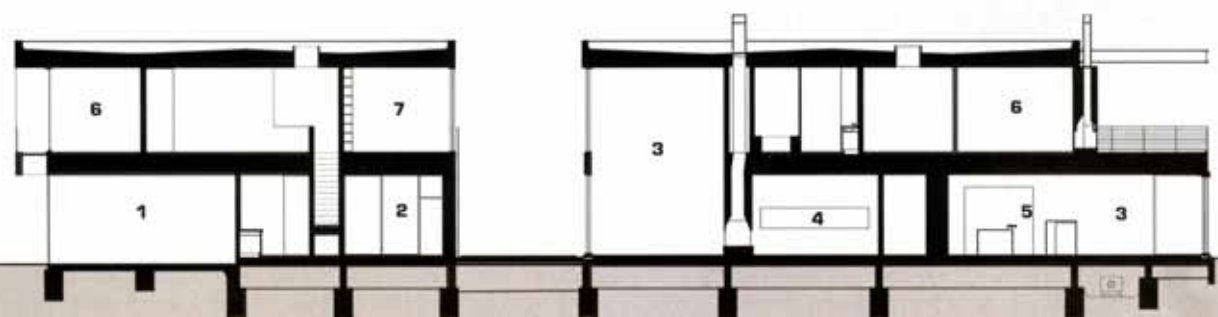




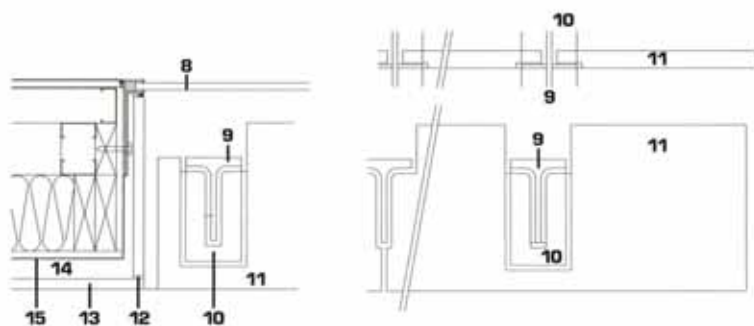
second-floor plan



first-floor plan



north-south section



louver details at terminations (plan)

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| 1 garage               | 10 steel plate welded to steel column underneath |
| 2 exercise room        | 11 limestone louver                              |
| 3 living room          | 12 mortar joint                                  |
| 4 dining room          | 13 limestone veneer                              |
| 5 kitchen              | 14 thick mortar                                  |
| 6 bedroom              | 15 lap building paper and plywood backer board   |
| 7 office               |  |
| 8 clear tempered glass |  |
| 9 steel column         |  |

### Oshry Residence, Los Angeles

client | Scott Oshry architect | SPF:a, Los Angeles—Zoltan E. Pali (principal in charge); Judit Fekete, Jeffrey Stenfors (principals); Gregory Fischer, Shaheen Seth, Malina Palasthira, Greg Hill, Brian Cavanaugh (project team) landscape architect | Blue Door Gardens engineers | Philip Huang & Associates (structural); Kerr-Pali & Associates, Electrical Design Associates (M/E/P) general contractor | Archetype area | 5,000 square feet cost | \$1.2 million photographs | John Edward Linden

### Specifications

exterior metal/glass curtain walls | Arcadia exterior metals | Barnett-Bates stone | Stone Resources glass | Trident skylights | Dur-Red Products wood doors | T.M. Cobb sliding doors | Fleetwood locksets | RSA hinges | Hager cabinet hardware | Accuride; Blum cabinetwork/custom woodwork | T & R Carpentry paints and stains | Sinclair flooring | Esh Flooring lighting | Iris/Lightolier (downlights); Bega (exterior) plumbing fixtures | Kohler; Grohe; Metropolis; Franke



## interior domains

If there is a theme running through the interiors of our Home of the Year projects, it is a comfortable, livable take on modernism: simple, sleek forms softened by warm tones and textures. From the exterior, the Oshry House in Bel Air, for example, embodies a stark, space-age aesthetic (page 62). Inside, however, the architect and client collaborated to create spaces that, while modern, are also homey and inviting. In the living room, a series of three mod, white coffee tables from **Diva** ([www.divafurniture.com](http://www.divafurniture.com)) are offset by pale wood flooring and warm red rugs, while an elevated fireplace by **Majestic** ([www.majesticfireplaces.com](http://www.majesticfireplaces.com)), framed by white panels that match the tables, adds literal warmth to the room. In the Pfanner House in Chicago (page 42), interior spaces are furnished with careful but unpretentious detailing: for example, elegant yet sturdy door hardware such as *Oblique*, a cross between a knob and a lever designed by Peter Emrys-Roberts of **ERA** ([www.erastudio.com](http://www.erastudio.com)). At Maison Goulet in Quebec (page 48), plywood wall paneling of British Columbian fir reveals an aesthetic that is simultaneously cozy and structural. The shapes of the knot-free panels are evocative of Japanese origami paper sculptures, while the tone of the pale wood gives the spaces a bright, sunny atmosphere. An adjustable-height, blond beechwood-top coffee table called *Crescendo*, from **Ligne Roset** ([www.ligne-roset.com](http://www.ligne-roset.com)), matches the light hues of the wall panels, while its steel and lacquered-aluminum frame and legs blend with the tones of the stone slab floor. At Date & State in San Diego (page 54), two *Yolanda Side Chairs* made by **Ukao** ([www.ukao.com](http://www.ukao.com)) add a bit of low-key design to a bedroom with their curved, bent-plywood, cut-out forms and pale bamboo veneer. Together, these interior details contribute to environments that, each in their own way, show that simple design does not have to be cold, and that modernism can work in a domestic setting just as well as in a corporate or institutional one.



Origami-like plywood wall paneling made of British Columbian fir lends a playful tectonic to the interiors of Maison Goulet in Quebec, as a beech-topped coffee table from Ligne Roset reflects the walls' light hue (above left and right). The pliability of wood is also demonstrated by chairs from Ukao at the Date & State home in San Diego (below left).



Hybrid handles/levers by ERA add a simple elegance to doors at the Pfanner House in Chicago (above right). In Bel Air, the Oshry House's living room is warmed by a fireplace from Majestic and furnished with tables from Diva (below).

