

WINTER 2006

# innovative HOME

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# Perched for Perfection

Bold beauty of Blue Jay Way represents a cooperative client-architect partnership in design and a simple and direct approach to modernistic problem solving. » by **SHALENE ROBERTS**,  
images by **JOHN EDWARD LINDEN PHOTOGRAPHY**



A concrete plinth anchors the glass living space above and the teak-clad upper level.

**NESTLED ATOP THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS, A WEB-LIKE GRID OF IDYLIC STREETS, EACH BEARING THE NAME OF A BIRD, SPLINTERS OFF FROM DOHENY DRIVE.** Amidst this maze of secluded avenues is Blue Jay Way, the street that leads to a celebrated 9,250-square-foot dwelling created by the award-winning Los Angeles-based Studio Pali Fekete Architects.

Founded in 1988 by Zoltan E. Pali, the award-winning SPF:a boasts an accomplished portfolio featuring a collection of projects that requires a high level of design sensitivity, technical expertise and hands-on principal involvement. Since its inception, SPF:a has amassed a variety of projects ranging in size and scope from 5,500-square-foot private homes to the 300,000-square-foot Getty Villa Museum. The firm's principals are also the founders, owners and curators of the Museum of Design Art and Architecture (MODAA),

a 1,800-square-foot art gallery built into SPF:a's corporate offices in Culver City, Calif.

Perched atop a steep, nearly 45-degree grade, the impressive four-level residence aptly deemed The House on Blue Jay Way is one of the firm's celebrated success stories. The project was commissioned by homeowner Jeff Beuth, a young entrepreneur who had been acquainted with the firm on several previous occasions. As the owner of the Blue Jay Way property, Beuth also possessed the dismal motel-like structure that occupied the land. The dilapidated dwelling minimized the view and was defined by poor design. Thus in 2002, he tasked Pali with the challenge of reinventing and modernizing the space.

Though the project was essentially deemed a remodel, it was a laborious undertaking. From start to finish the modern monolith

## BLUE JAY WAY



The transparent shower in the master bath looks through to the master bedroom beyond. **Opposite:** The wide central stairway makes an impressive statement with its vast opening. The size and scope of the stairway deceives the eye and makes the ceiling appear taller than its actual height.

took two and a half years. Twelve of those months were spent at the drawing board before breaking ground on the construction. Once construction commenced, Pali and his team stripped the residence down to its existing piles and started from scratch at the bedrock. To augment the foundation for additional floors, Pali contracted the original engineer to serve on the project. The engineer provided the design team with his original calculations, which ensured a solid foundation. Atop the foundation, Pali and his team created additional square footage and erected a new steel structural system. Pali was also intentional in the siting of the structure. He carefully oriented the house to take utmost advantage of exterior shading for cooling and absorption of the sun's rays for warmth.

The House on Blue Jay Way features a crisp concrete plinth base of two levels, housing parking garages and a host of recreational amenities. A screening room, gymnasium, wine cellar and disco lounge complete the first-level interior. The second level, an all-glass living space, contrasts with the concrete monolith beneath while anchoring the teak-clad upper level floating above. Jutting off the master bedroom, a Miesian sitting room steals 180-degree views of the Los Angeles valley below, stretching from the Getty Museum to the skyscrapers of downtown L.A.

Inside the home, an open, airy floor plan emphasizes natural light in every room. Main program elements are central and low, so as not to block views to the outside. The circulation plan creates space along the perimeter of the home, promoting changing vistas and connection with the outdoors as one moves freely between living, dining, kitchen and private areas.

**DESIGN TEAM:** Zoltan E. Pali, FAIA

**ENGINEER:** Henry Guzman & Co.

**INTERIOR:** Zoltan E. Pali, FAIA with client Jeff Beuth

**GENERAL CONTRACTOR:** William Kent Development

**OWNER:** Jeff Beuth

**CONSTRUCTION TIMELINE:** 2004-2005

**STRUCTURAL SYSTEM:** Some steel moment frame, some wood framing

**EXTERIOR COMPOSITION:** Teak plywood cladding, glass, cement

**INTERIOR COMPOSITION:** Various elements, including walnut, teak, stone and steel

**CABINETRY:** Custom by Rick LaBorico, Hillside Interiors

**DOORS AND HARDWARE:** Fleetwood

**WINDOWS:** U.S. Aluminum

**BATH FIXTURES:** Various, including Hansgrohe, Axor, Starck and Porcher

**SINKS AND TUB:** Kohler, Hansgrohe, Home Depot Expo and Roburn

**LIGHTING:** Artemide, Lightwave Lighting Co.

**KITCHEN PLUMBING FIXTURES:** Dornbracht

**KITCHEN APPLIANCES AND EQUIPMENT:** Gaggenau, Sub-Zero, Sharp, Miele

**SQUARE FOOTAGE:** 9,250

**COST:** Withheld at owner's request

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** Studio Pali Fekete Architects  
8609 Washington Blvd.  
Culver City, CA 90232  
www.spfa.com



First Floor



Second Floor



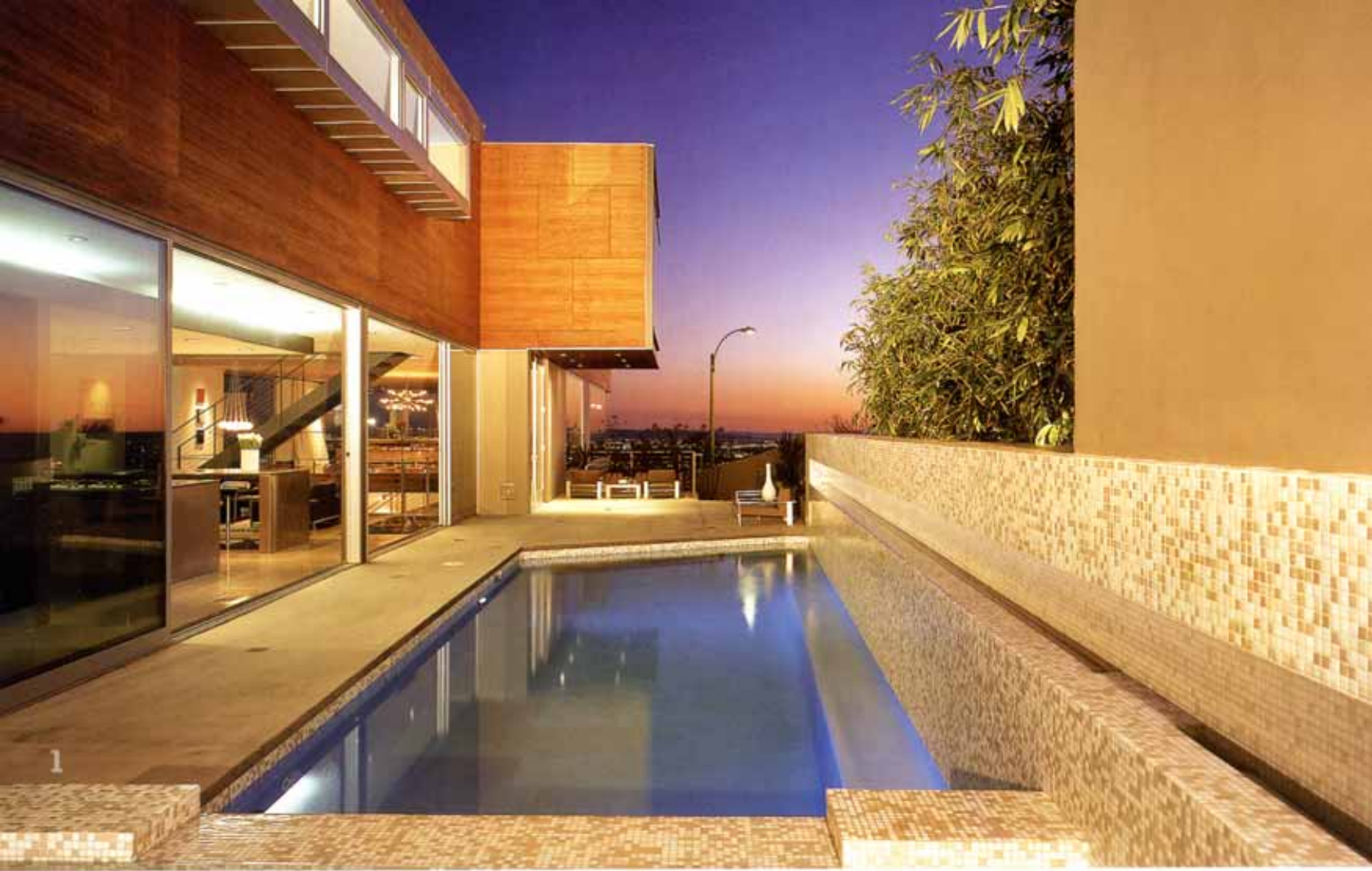
Third Floor

- 1. Exercise Room
- 2. Catering Kitchen
- 3. Screening Room
- 4. Office
- 5. Wine Cellar
- A. Garage

- 7. Window into Pool from 1st Floor
- 8. Family Room
- 9. Kitchen
- 10. Dining Room
- 11. Living Room
- 12. View from Living Room Balcony

- 13. Roof Deck
- 14. Guest Bedrooms
- 15. Walk-in Closets
- 16. Master Bedroom
- 17. Sitting Room









1 The stunning entry pool features LED lighting and multilevel fountain functionality. The waterway butts up against the billiards room and is separated from the game room by a transparent glass wall. 2 A view of the southern edge of the house. 3 Expansive sliding doors surround the midlevel, offering a breathtaking vista of the Los Angeles basin below. 4 The custom kitchen by Rick LaBorico of Hillside Interiors features stainless countertops and walnut-stained cabinetry. Floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors open the space to the pool area. 5 The owner-designed walnut table in the foreground and the fountain beyond create subtle separation between the living and dining areas.

"The reality of this is that we tried to keep the spaces as open as possible," Pali said. "The main floor, kitchen, dining and living area are all one floor; it's really all about livability. ... That level is virtually all glass, and all the glass panels slide away and open the house to the exterior. The extension at that main level opens the home to the surrounding elements." The all-glass extension, which serves as a multifaceted viewing station for the basin below, also seeks to draw the eye out toward the expansive vista. In doing so, Pali created a long, horizontal line of sight, which counteracts the otherwise modest ceiling height on the main floor of 7.5 feet.

Simple and organic elements comprise the interior. Cool earth-toned concrete melds with natural woods and painted drywall, creating an element of tangible texture and dimension throughout the light-filled space. Daylighting blurs the lines between inside and out and eradicates the need for artificial lighting throughout

the day. Natural ventilation cools the home without the use of an air conditioner by ushering in temperate California breezes. "The house has a quality about it that is inside and out," Pali said.

The exterior is composed of earth-toned materials—purchased locally—to complement the interiors and further enhance the modern design. The outer skin is teak with an inner marine plywood core. The tawny teak with its unique pattern created by the slight color variations within the wood is a subtle contrast against the monochromatic gray-toned concrete of the first floor. "The material has a beautiful quality to it that warms up the house," Pali said.

Arguably one of the hallmarks of the dwelling is the tranquil lap pool that occupies the home's inner courtyard space. The pool, which butts up against the first-floor billiards room, is separated from the game room by a glass wall. This transparent barrier allows one to peer into the depths of the indulgent waters as though staring into an aquarium. The waterway's fully automated lighting systems are monitored from a single source.

Crafted as a simple and direct approach to modern living, the home makes a bold statement. "Our work is typically a little more understated," Pali said, referring to his firm's typical core collection. "Our work tends to be a bit more subdued. But this really has a bold look to it."

Partly a result of the home's size and hilltop location, the bold attitude may also be attributed to the cooperation between the architect and the homeowner. "The client was very involved," Pali said. "He picked materials; he was the guy who furnished the place and did a lot of the interior decoration. When it was all done, he hung the last picture." Such active, cooperative involvement by all parties encouraged the team to achieve a higher standard, to push the design envelope further.

Completed in 2005, the project has since garnered attention from design enthusiasts and the architecture community as a whole. "The project has been extremely successful for us," Pali said, though he admits he didn't assume it would be. "People come to us, come to me because they see a body of work we've done, and they're looking for a certain flair. But it's not really even flair that we try to accomplish; it's simple and direct modernistic problem solving. And through that problem solving we're trying to find some beauty." In the case of Blue Jay Way, modernistic problem solving has created a dwelling of pervading beauty. **PH**