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point of view

A PACIFIC PALISADES HOUSE CONNECTS WITH ITS SITE THROUGH
CLEAN LINES, A NATURAL PALETTE AND FLOWING SPACES.

WRITTEN BY JEFFREY HEAD PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN ELLIS

ARCHITECTURE Russell Shubin, AIA, Shubin + Donaldson Architects

INTERIOR DESIGN Summer Jensen, Hawk & Co.

HOME BUILDER Curtis Quillin, Quillin Construction Corp.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE Dirk J. Gaudet, ASLA, Gaudet Design Group,
and Selena Souders, Big Red Sun

BEDROOMS 3 | **BATHROOMS** 5 | **SQUARE FEET** 4,600

Architect Russell Shubin marked the entry of a Pacific Palisades house with a board-form concrete wall. *Opposite top:* Floor-to-ceiling sliding doors connect the living area with an outdoor terrace. *Opposite bottom:* Landscape designer Selena Souders placed large discs overflowing with sculptural plantings around the property.



Real luxury is restraint," says architect Russell Shubin of his approach to redesigning the Pacific Palisades residence of Karina and Blake Mirkin and their two young children. "It's qualitative. It's not about more is better." What the Mirkin's existing house—a 1960s structure that had been remodeled in the 1980s—lacked with its relatively small footprint, it made up for with its unique siting. "The house is on a promontory," Shubin says. "So every place on the site has a completely different view. We let the forms of the house fall out of framing those particular vistas and experiences."

Shubin took the structure down to its studs and then reshaped the exterior with flat roofs and clean modernist lines. As the house is built into the hillside, he placed the public areas on the top floor, the master bedroom and two children's rooms one level down, and an office below that. To capture the expansive views, Shubin held back from the expected walls of floor-to-ceiling glass in favor of carefully crafted vistas for impact. "There's more drama in strategically placed openings and views," explains the architect. "It's the juxtaposition of solid and void."

"I CHOSE A PALETTE THAT WAS
COMPLEMENTARY OF THE BEACH."



Designer Summer Jensen wrapped a wood console from Phillips Collection around a custom bench covered with fabric from Armani/Casa Exclusive Textiles by Rubelli. She designed the open kitchen with warm Hawaiian koa wood cabinetry and an island made with white quartzite.

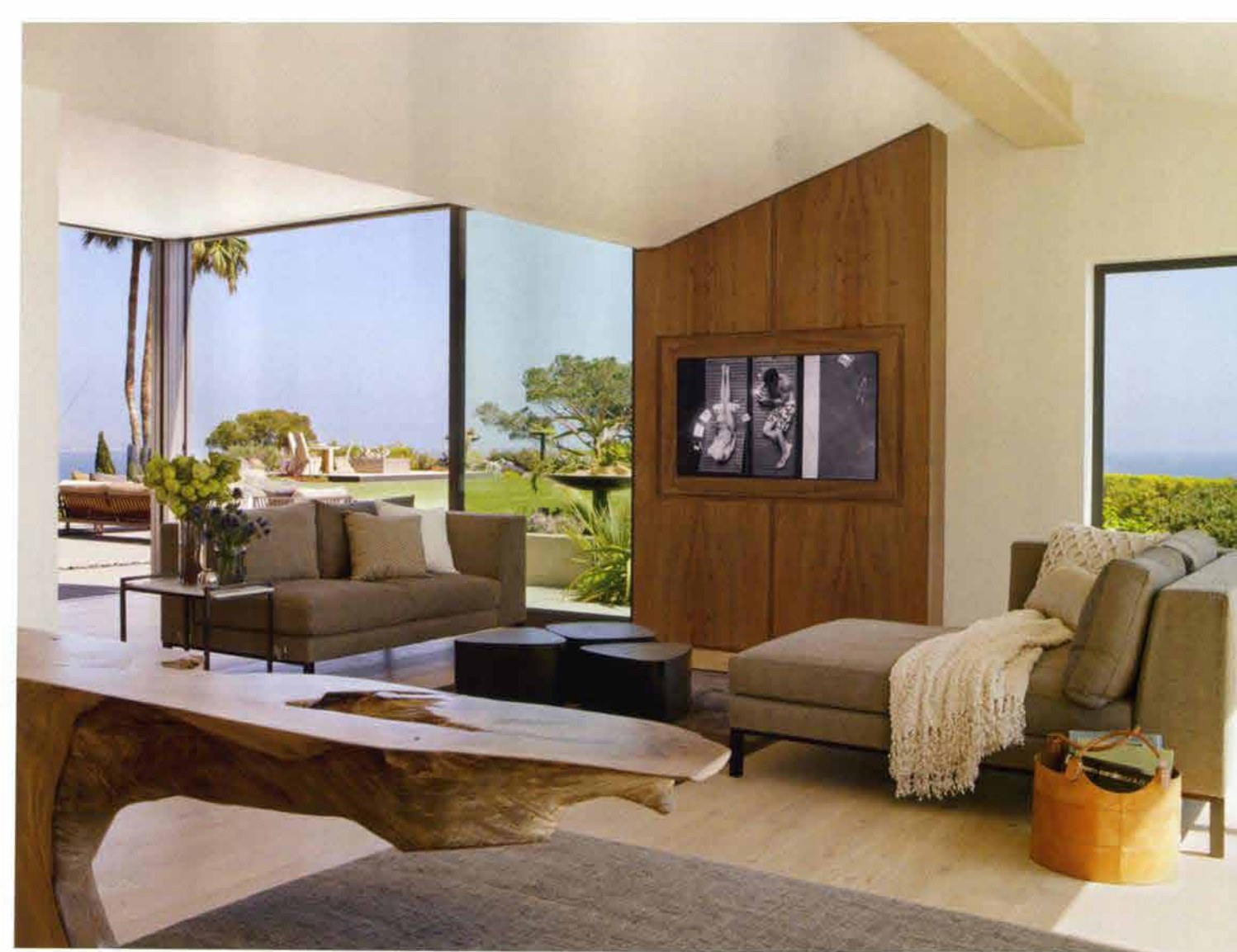
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The architect also made the most of the limited footprint by eliminating transitional areas to blur the line between indoors and out. "The design problem I faced was how to create more visual, usable space," explains Shubin, who dissolved the boundary between the living area and a large outdoor terrace with a corner of floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors. "We designed from the inside out and from the outside in. We captured that space from the exterior." That method aligned perfectly with the Mirkin's lifestyle. "We wanted to take advantage of this lot in a significant way," Blake Mirkin says. "And what we built dovetails with the way we live with our two sons: lots of indoor and outdoor entertainment."

Designer Summer Jensen underscored this seamless blend. "Because the views are so amazing and they're a family that lives outdoors, I wanted the interiors to step back a little bit," Jensen says. "I chose a palette that was complementary of the beach, like the driftwood and sand, and then let the views provide the dynamic colors." She chose a durable white oak for the floor and then cerused and white-washed it, and designed custom kitchen cabinetry from Hawaiian koa wood.



A wall paneled with koa lends a rich counterpoint to the dining room's corner window, which offers uninterrupted coastline views. The custom table and benches, upholstered with hair-on-hide from Saddlemans of Santa Fe, are from Plantation, and the pendant is by John Pomp Studios from A. Rudin.



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To play off the white walls, she incorporated panels of koa to frame the television in the living area and offset a corner window in the dining area. "I wanted there to be some areas that were highlighted," says Jensen, who also designed upholstered furniture pieces meant to be comfortable and flexible. "Since the floor plan is quite small, we really wanted it to feel like one unified space that also extends to the outdoors," says Jensen of the outdoor terrace she appointed with seating and dining areas. "I used the same palette as the interior so the outdoor room felt like part of the entire house and added to their overall living space."

Even though very little square footage was added to the existing floor plan, the slope and shape of the lot presented serious geological challenges. The house's foundation had settled five inches and builder Curtis Quillin had to reinforce it by installing a total of 20 friction piles 30 feet deep. "It was grueling work because digging for the piles was done by hand," Quillin says. "It took over 16 weeks to perform."

In the main living area, Shubin kept the interior pitch of the ceiling from the original structure, and Jensen used koa paneling to conceal the television wiring. She covered a custom sofa and chaise lounge with a textile from Castel.

"WE DESIGNED FROM THE INSIDE
OUT AND FROM THE OUTSIDE IN."

Jensen chose a sofa and chairs from Janus et Cie to face a built-in fire pit on the expansive terrace, which landscape architect Dirk J. Gaudet accented with channels of river rocks. A long custom dining table and bar-height chairs are by James de Wulf.



Jensen used walnut for the master bath's vanity and to create a frame around the area. Sconces by Marian Jamieson through Holly Hunt illuminate the space, and a door opens to a wrap-around terrace and the ocean air.



In the master bedroom, Jensen placed Plantation's Matador bench at the foot of a custom bed dressed with linens from Restoration Hardware and pillows made with Castel velvet. Boyd Lighting's Library sconces attach to a mirror flanked by walnut cabinets Jensen designed and inlaid with shagreen.

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Ironically, the largest and flattest part of the property is used as a lawn. "The grass offers a feeling of expansiveness you don't normally get in this area," says landscape architect Dirk J. Gaudet, who designed the property's hardscaping with basic forms that complement the architecture's scale and shape. "It also gives an open-edge view of the ocean and city lights." To punctuate the grounds, landscape designer Selena Souders, who selected the plantings, installed eight round steel dishes on three sides of the house. The disc-like vessels, reaching up to twelve feet high and six feet wide, "add scale and sculptural focal points to the property," Souders says.

During the two years of construction, the owners were faced with making countless decisions. "When you're building a house, you always have crossroads," Blake says. "Essentially, at every one of the crossroads we chose quality over budget because we thought the architecture and location merited it. We felt we had to do it right." **L**