

Warming Trend

MODERN



LEGACIES

KAA Design Group and **Tim Clarke** inject California's contemporary look with a new sense of lively comfort

photography by Jonn Coolidge and Grey Crawford/text by Laura Mauk

"It was an opportunity to showcase some of the architectural ideas that were spawned way back in early California modernism," says Grant Kirkpatrick, a principal architect with KAA Design Group, referring to a house in Pacific Palisades, California. "In the 1920s, European architects like Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler began to explore what it meant to design, build and live in this incredible climate and landscape." To lend unexpected warmth to the historical perspective, Kirkpatrick collaborated with interior designer Tim Clarke. "So many people use a lot of midcentury modern furni-

THIS PAGE: Inspired by California modernism and Spanish Colonial style, KAA Design Group created a house in Pacific Palisades, California, that balances large expanses of glass with thick plaster walls. **OPPOSITE:** To give the interiors richness and ease, Tim Clarke used pieces from his Santa Monica shop, including the living room's tuxedo sofas, pillows covered with Indian batik and a low table with woven leather.





ture when they do a contemporary residence like this," Clarke notes. "They reach for a classic modern look, which is beautiful but has been done a million times."

Kirkpatrick found specific inspiration in the 1922 residence and studio Rudolph Schindler designed for himself on Kings Road in Los Angeles. "The courtyard spaces, the outdoor rooms, the sleeping porches, the walls that are made up of doors and windows—we used a lot of these things in the Pacific Palisades house," he says. While reflecting qualities of California modernism, the KAA design also pays tribute to another prominent Southern California architectural aesthetic: Spanish Colonial style. The first level of the building features thick plaster walls and deeply inset, angled windows that take their cue from the genre's signature niches. "The house is a convergence of two movements," explains project manager Erik Evens, "early California modernism and the great white plaster Spanish Colonial tradition of the turn-of-the-century revivalists."

In addition to requesting a house that makes a strong architectural statement, the clients wanted a place that would be suitable for a young family. Kirkpatrick and Evens responded by

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The entrance facade combines mahogany, plaster and glass. The entry's coffered ceiling extends to the exterior and overhangs the front door. Tim Clarke. The architects designed a two-story volume at the house's center; Clarke furnished it with Warisan chairs and an antique Chinese table. **OPPOSITE:** Jolts of color enliven the media room, where a swivel chair is covered with Donghia fabric and patterned pillows accent a sofa with nailhead trim; the tray tables are from Baker Furniture.



designing a two-and-a-half-story volume at the center of the house. "The residence is a metaphorical village," explains Evens, "with pavilion-like bedrooms around the nucleus. They're individual retreats for the family members. But when they leave their bedrooms, they come back to the center, the family space." Clarke made the area a cozy gathering place by putting coconut-wood chairs from Warisan in Los Angeles around an antique Chinese carved-elm low table.

Clarke helped to blur the line between the indoors and the outdoors by "keeping the flooring material the same wherever there's a transition from an interior space to an exterior one," he explains. The designer outfitted the living room floor and the adjacent terrace with French limestone. He placed textured materials throughout the room, as well as the house, "to hide wear and tear and make everything natural and approachable," he says. "The tuxedo-style custom sofas are upholstered with linen and boxed and welted so they have a rectilinear shape. A box cushion is really comfortable and can be down-filled. It's soft but still looks very modern." He scattered a collection of pillows covered with Indian prints and vintage textiles about the sofas to add graphic accents.

"In the family room, there's linen velvet on the sectional sofa," says Clarke. "The texture disguises the fact that there are little kids jumping on it with their shoes on." He chose natural colors for the room. "There are spots of orange," he says, "like California poppies. I used blue hues that you'd see in the ocean and green ones inspired by the lush plantings of the yard. The contrast of the blue and the orange is fantastic."

The dining room displays a zebrawood table and leather-upholstered barrel chairs designed by Clarke. From this area is a view of a Japanese maple in the garden and a stacked-bluestone wall. "I kept this room simple," he explains. "I didn't want patterned



RIGHT: Leather barrel chairs with nailhead trim encircle a massive zebrawood table from Promemoria in the dining room. Box-shaped pendants with organza shades from Foundry Lighting hang above the table, which is dressed with glazed pottery bottles from Silho Furniture in Los Angeles. Mahogany-and-glass doors slide open to a garden area featuring a bluestone-stacked wall and a Japanese maple tree.





chairs that would interfere with the view, which is itself a sort of textured wall." In the kitchen, he paired an oval walnut table with chairs that have woven leather seats and backs. "Kids always sit on their feet when they're eating," he explains. "Leather just looks better with more use." The designer topped the island with walnut and selected mahogany cabinetry to give warmth to the bluestone countertops and the Carrara marble backsplash.

"The lanai is open on two sides and has a fireplace," says Clarke. "I wanted something strong and whimsical that would make the eye stop because the garden is very green, so I made the fabrics here brighter and more fun." He set vibrant green and blue pillows on Sutherland teak sofas. A side table and candlesticks from Clarke's retail store have the appearance of hand-carved driftwood pieces. "I played with more organic shapes and bleached-out or pale woods that aren't finished," he says, "things that have honesty, that work in a sincere environment and can look beautiful all on their own."

For the guest room, the architects designed a long, horizontal win-

ABOVE: A horizontal window dominates the guest room. Clarke designed maple side tables and a platform bed, which he covered with Calvin Klein sheets and set on a rug from Decorative Carpets. The throw pillows are wrapped with batik from John Robshaw Textiles; the Silho Furniture lamp has a papyrus shade. **OPPOSITE:** In the master bath, oiled mahogany cabinetry is offset by a limestone tub surround and countertops. An antique Tibetan rug and a Chinese garden stool make the space feel livable.

Design Details Warm Modern Style



Erik Evens (left) and Grant Kirkpatrick from KAA Design Group in Los Angeles.



Tim Clarke used pillows covered with fabrics displaying lively patterns and vibrant tones from his store in Santa Monica to add spots of color throughout the house.



Kirkpatrick and Evens were inspired by the residence and studio (above) that Rudolph Schindler designed in 1922 for himself on Kings Road in Los Angeles.

"Mahogany siding, which trims and frames the windows, is dark and beautifully textured," says Evens. "It contrasts with the light-colored plaster."

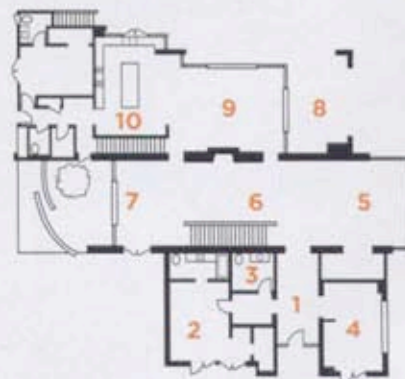


A stump-branch side table from Clarke's retail shop lends an organic, rough-hewn quality to the lanai.

FLOOR PLAN

Main Level

- 1 Entry
- 2 Guest room
- 3 Powder room
- 4 Office
- 5 Living room
- 6 Sitting area
- 7 Dining room
- 8 Lanai
- 9 Family room
- 10 Kitchen





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dow that frames the verdant greenery of a hedge in the yard. Clarke customized a maple platform bed and side tables that are horizontal, too, supplying the room with symmetry. When it came to the master bath, he made romance and snugness a priority. "A bath shouldn't feel too sterile," says Clarke. "It should be a place you want to be in." The designer selected limestone with fossils for the countertops and the tub surround, oiled mahogany for the cabinetry and antique Tibetan rugs for the floor. "I added these materials so the feel would be richer and more textured," he explains.

KAA Design Group celebrates its twentieth anniversary this

year, and Kirkpatrick and Evens consider themselves lucky. Like Schindler and Neutra at the forefront of California modernism, "we're able to design buildings that examine the interface between the indoors and the outdoors in a fluid way," Evens says. "You can't do that in a lot of the country." The architects are just as emphatic about the idea that a house should respond to its cultural locale. "If we're designing a building in an area with a stylistic tradition, we're very open to it," Evens continues, "particularly when we can blend those traditions with contemporary design notions and how people live today." +



ABOVE: "The upper floor hovers above the lower level, which looks like it was carved out," says Kirkpatrick. "This creates depth and focuses views to the outdoor areas designed by our landscape architect Damon Hein." **TOP RIGHT:** Clarke complemented a walnut table from Silho Furniture with woven leather chairs from Shelter Furniture in the kitchen. The walnut barstools are from Bottega Montana. **RIGHT:** A bluestone fire surround acts as a wall in the lanai. Sutherland teak sofas and chairs give the space subtle texture and warmth. "Just because a house is modern doesn't mean it has to be cold," says Clarke.