

# southbay

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## THE GOOD FIGHT

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Meet the South Bay Family Behind the  
World's Fastest Growing Sport*

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# Drawing Focus

Top residential architects Grant Kirkpatrick and Erik Evens talk shop, the future of South Bay design ... and that one time in Saudi Arabia.

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From the airy warehouse HQ in Marina Del Rey, KAA Design Group has built a solid rep for its broad range and lifestyle-driven design, including the warm, contemporary style it has popularized here in the South Bay. Having attracted clients of the A-list (Tom Hanks and Matt Damon among them) and fashion (Hugo Boss) varieties, the firm's two principals are tightening their focus with a new boutique concept. We sit down to get the scoop.

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**Earlier this year, you made some structural changes (pun intended) at KAA Design Group. What’s the new plan?**

**Grant Kirkpatrick:** We took the company and developed two distinct studios, Kirkpatrick Architects and Evens

Architects, which each specialize in two different design sensibilities: contemporary and traditional. Over time, we realized that our residential clients fall into one of those two camps, by and large.

**Erik Evens:** Initially, it started as a business move to provide our clients with a boutique environment that spoke to the point of view that they were interested in. As we started to explore it, we both came around to realize we were interested in specializing ourselves. It ended up being very personal for us. **The two boutique firms, Kirkpatrick Architects and Evens Architects, represent your own individual design tastes. Tell us about those.**

**EE:** I’m really fascinated with classical and traditional work. Traditional architecture doesn’t need to be an exercise in historicism; it can be updated and finetuned to address a modern lifestyle.

**GK:** I really enjoy the modernist sensibility of lifestyle elements, like indoor/outdoor living and the use of technology and modern materials to explore and push boundaries. There’s a tremendous history of great architecture starting with the California modernists, so there’s a legacy here that has stood the test of time and I’d like to carry on.

**This new studio structure seems like a natural progression. Does it mean a new**

**office structure too?**

**EE:** We’ll continue to work from the same office and collaborate like we’ve always done. Grant is working on a modern house now, and he calls me in for my opinion and vice versa.

**GK:** Basically, I’m going to have to continue to stare at him from across the table every day!

**After 15 years of working together, do you have any memorable projects that stand out?**

**EE:** We’ve shared a lot of fun times together. The one that stands out for me is the Beverly Hills project for a Saudi Arabian prince. Grant and I got the chance to travel to Saudi Arabia together—it was such a great adventure!

**Let’s talk trends. What movements are you seeing in home design now?**

**GK:** I’d say what’s trending is things that are not trending! Specifically, people are looking for authenticity, timelessness and materials that are used in honest and sincere ways—something that won’t get tired in a few years. **What do you feel are some of the trends homeowners have grown weary of?**

**GK:** They’re tired of the Mediterranean and East Coast types of architecture that have both been doubled down on for the past few decades.

**EE:** In terms of trends, I’d add the notion of imperfection.

**GK:** It’s a movement that we’ve been noticing. Clients aren’t looking for a perfect piece of architecture but some way of providing character and building some of their own personality into the house. It’s seen in details that appear to have been eroded by the natural elements to heavy textured flooring with nicks and grooves.

**EE:** They want the feel of a home that’s worn and comfortable, like an old shoe. **Can you play fast and speak to the future of building in the South Bay?**

**GK:** One thing is for sure: They’re pretty interested in larger properties. There’s an insatiable desire for oversized lots.

**EE:** And double lots! People’s lifestyles are demanding more utility out of these houses, and they’re looking for ways to do that—whether it be combining lots or putting in large, elaborate basements or sub-basements. **What’s next for you guys?**

**GK:** We love where we are. Erik and I are both around 50, so we’re at a point where we know we were put on this earth to do great custom homes. We don’t need skyscrapers and restaurants any more.

**EE:** The evolution of the firm has led us to a place where we feel really good. The future for us right now is to continue to refine that vision. ●