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ERIK EVENS, AIA  
[www.evensarc.com](http://www.evensarc.com)

"The highest charge as a designer is to create beautiful things," says Erik Evens, principal of Los Angeles-based Evens Architects, a specialty studio within KAA Design Group. Of course, the question of what is beautiful will always be a matter of subjectivity—especially in a city that has long had an obsession with modernism. Yet for each moment when L.A.'s architecture looks forward, there is always a moment to look back—an opportunity for us to pay homage and bring history into the present. This is the space where Erik Evens operates: at the intersection of modern thought and tradition. It's where beauty is born.

A lifelong California resident, Evens might have been trained as a modernist nearly three decades ago—but he eventually tossed out the well-known manifestos ("form follows function" and "no ornamentation") along with the notion that tradition is for the uninspired. Today, the architect is not only a founding member and current president of the Southern California Chapter of the Institute of Classical Architecture and Art, but is also known for making deep, meaningful connections between house and land. These connections, expressed in classical design language, have earned Evens' firm both client praise and critical acclaim, with publications such as Architectural Digest, House Beautiful and Western Interiors recognizing his work. "I'm interested in building homes that look like they belong where they are," he tells me.

"When you look at Mediterranean styles and study their history, for example, they work in the California climate for a reason," he says. "Thick plaster walls reflect the sun. Large expansive glass allows us to connect to terraces and outdoor spaces. And beautiful textured materials such as terracottas, plasters and tiles feel as if they are 'of the earth.' To turn your back on all of that accumulated wisdom from the great artists and architects of the past is foolish to me. At the same time, learning from the past does not mean living in the past."

## A THING OF BEAUTY

*Jan Horn, Founder and Executive Director,  
Architectural Division of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage*

After listening to Evens, your traditional notions about traditional architecture go out the window. You can see where form has followed function in some cases, where decoration becomes an act of love, where great architects have passed down their wisdom to future generations. Whether it's a Tuscan estate inspired by a 15th Century Benedictine abbey in Carmel Valley or a splashy bungalow inspired by the Caribbean's British Colonial architecture in Manhattan Beach, his residences all manage to capture the California spirit and connect to the locale. So even though the teak, plantation shutters and verandahs of British Colonial architecture might seem out of place on The Strand initially—Evens proves these design elements belong in a coastal setting just steps from the beach. "It captures the romance of a seaside locale," says Evens.

The Strand house has particularly resonated with local residents, but to Evens, it's indicative of traditional architecture's ability to connect people to history. "Traditional architecture makes people happy. It speaks to people in a powerful way."



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