

DESIGN



Photographs by KAM HEVELY LOS ANGELES TIMES

SPACIOUS: Shaya Kirkpatrick works in her office, where walls open to the front patio. The design, by architect husband Grant, was inspired by the Modernist Schindler House.

HOME OF THE TIMES

An open environment

The windows are many and the barriers few in this modern family house in Manhattan Beach.



Grant and Shaya Kirkpatrick relax with their dog, Lola, above, in their backyard living area, which features a flat-screen television and a fireplace to take the chill off cool evenings. The home's openness continues into the master bath, where a glass door slides into a pocket in the wall and the room becomes a sun-filled balcony.



latimes.com/home

Go online for more photos

Our extended gallery contains the living area, kitchen and more.

MORRIS NEWMAN

Tucked on a packed street in Manhattan Beach, the home of Shaya and Grant Kirkpatrick is based on a classic idea in Southern California Modernism: the coexistence of the open and the enclosed.

Open, in this case, means window-filled walls and light-filled rooms, with few visible structural supports. Some walls stop short of the ceiling, making visitors wonder what's holding up the house. Stairs jut out, seemingly suspended by invisible forces. Even bathrooms feel open. In the master, a glass door slides into a pocket in the wall, and the room becomes a sun-filled balcony, as if there were no barrier to the outdoors.

"It did take a little getting used to," Shaya says, "but now I could spend all day there."

Other spaces are more sheltered and private: the intimate, glass-walled dining room, where a stand of bamboo keeps outsiders from looking in; the study, with its slozy walls of poured concrete; bedrooms for Allie, 8, Ryan, 11, and Jack, 14; and the master for Grant, principal of K&A Design Group of Los Angeles, and Shaya, an interior designer.

The strategy of alternating openness and enclosure drove the design of the house, Grant says. On a piece of scrap paper, he sketches the floor plan as a checkerboard—some areas sunny and expansive, others walled-in and private.

His inspiration was the Schindler House, the 1922 Modernist landmark in West Hollywood notable for slab concrete walls that define not only the home and its courtyard but also its gardens.

For his place, Grant chose not to replicate Schindler's style but rather his idea of a house and landscape so integrally entwined that it's sometimes difficult to tell one from the other. Schindler's strategy of using clerestory windows just below the roofline is repeated here, bringing natural light and a hint of the outside world into the home without compromising privacy.

With the ocean just a few blocks away, the house requires little heating or cooling. When temperatures do drop, the concrete floors deliver radiant heat. And in warm weather, a fan draws hot air out of the top of the house and pulls in cool air at ground level. Shade comes from mature eucalyptuses in the neighborhood, known in Manhattan Beach as "the tree section."

Finally, at times, the home feels like a tree-house. Although the open plan appears simple, it required complex engineering because of the minimum number of interior walls, according to contractor Jeff Wilson.

"There's almost no wasted space," Wilson says of the 3,300-square-foot, four-bedroom house, snugly fit onto a long, narrow lot typical of beach communities.

Because the house sits on a slope, the front consists of two stories and the back consists of three, with the garage and sun-filled room discreetly tucked away on the lowest level. Though the property is only 40 feet wide, Grant was able to carve out a patio on the side of the house so the boys could haul their surfboards from the garage to the beach without dragging them through the home.

And Shaya's influence? "Everywhere," she says. One obvious touch is the breakfast bar, designed around an antique Chinese bench that Shaya found at Berbere Imports in Culver City.

Out front, walled Zen gardens flank a Japanese river rock led up the door—a procession that Shaya says "feels like crossing a bridge." She only wishes her husband could better enjoy what he had designed.

"Poor Grant," Shaya says. "He doesn't get to spend as much time in the house as I do."

Newman is a freelance writer.
home@latimes.com