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LOS ANGELES CALIFORNIA



PHOTOGRAPHED BY CLAUDIO SANTINI
WRITTEN BY CAROLYN WEBER

hollywood squares

sweeping hilltop views,
simple materials, and a
floorplan for easy living
make this boxy new
home a modern classic

"The house is on a promontory overlooking the San Fernando Valley, so we wanted to capture the amazing views," says architect Zoltan Pali, who used an anodized aluminum commercial storefront system to create two walls of windows in the living area.



OPPOSITE TOP The living area fireplace has an exposed flue that rises through a massive white oak counter, which doubles as a room divider. The architect kept the materials consistent in this wide-open plan, using the same white engineered stone for the kitchen countertops and the hearth. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM** Two 16-by-4-foot work islands define the kitchen. Although the majority of the home's custom cabinetry and flooring is natural white oak, "we opted for cork floors in the kitchen because it's softer to stand on," says Pali, "and used medium density fiberboard cabinets faced with aluminum laminate in the kitchen's wet zones." **LEFT** The sink island, adjacent to the family room, has an elevated oak breakfast bar. An expanse of slab-front oak custom cabinetry floats along the interior wall, separating the kitchen from a hallway. **BOTTOM LEFT** Blurring the line between indoors and out, a pair of pocket doors on each side of the dining room tuck away, exposing the main living spaces to the fresh air and natural light of the courtyards. Homeowner Sean Brosmith designed much of the furniture, including the American walnut dining room table, which he paired with Italian beach wood chairs.

Sean Brosmith has contemporary design in his blood. His father, Bert, a prominent modernist architect based on the East Coast, instilled in him a deep appreciation for simple lines and open, uncluttered spaces. "I've been surrounded by mid-20th-century design my whole life," says Sean, who founded his own industrial design company, Zorbit Resources, in Los Angeles. "I have a passion for it." In 2003, when he and his wife, Hsiu-Yen, discovered the perfect parcel of land at the top of Mulholland scenic highway (a ridge line that separates the Los Ange-

les basin and the San Fernando Valley), the first thing he did was call local architect Zoltan Pali to help him plot a modern masterpiece. "Sean and Hsiu-Yen had a very clear idea of what they wanted," says Pali, who devised the concept for the Brosmiths' new 4,200-square-foot hilltop home in just one weekend. "We had been living in a house with four stories and had grown really tired of all those stairs," says Sean. The couple, who have two small children, knew that the flat, one-acre site would allow them to spread out into a single-



floor plan

The site's half-acre, peninsula-shaped lot dictated the dwelling's linear plan: four individual pods situated along an 80-foot central spine hallway. The communal zone (1), with a kitchen and living, dining, and family rooms, is on the west side of the site; the private areas (2, 3, 4) align on the east side. The master suite (2), at the rear of the plan, has a bedroom, dressing room, office, and private outdoor courtyard. It overlooks the pool and the San Fernando Valley.



story layout better suited to their casual lifestyle and contemporary tastes.

Completed in 2004, Pali's design features four boxy pods of varying size and function lined up on either side of a long central hallway. One pod contains the master suite and office; a second serves as the kids' bedrooms; the third holds the guest suite, laundry, and powder room; and the last offers a large common living area. That main pavilion is the heart of the house, with a living room, dining room, kitchen, breakfast area, and family room. "There are no walls dividing the rooms, so it has an incredible feeling of openness," Sean says.

Maximizing views of the San Fernando Valley, as well as air and light within the house, was a priority. Several rooms have large banks of windows, and the dining room's glass pocket doors slide into the walls, exposing courtyards on either side.

"They're great places for the kids to play, and we get the merging of indoor and outdoor spaces that we wanted," Sean says.

For the exterior cladding, Sean and Pali searched for an alternative to the ubiquitous Southern California stucco. "We looked at plastic and metal," says Sean, "but settled on a teak plywood, which is typically used for yachts." They sealed the 3½-by-8-foot panels with a clear, marine-grade oil finish called Penefin. "It has to be reapplied every two years," says Pali, "but on a one-level house it's only about a day's worth of work."

Sean's new modern home is bound to become a classic, just as his father's designs have. "I like the low-key, understated, enduring qualities of the house," says Pali. "It plays nicely with the land, and the teak will age and become beautiful, like a handsome, old leather briefcase." ■



OPPOSITE Teak paneling covers a wall in the master bedroom, creating a backdrop for the custom-made king-size white oak bed. **LEFT** Oak cabinetry and engineered stone counters appear again, this time in the master bathroom. A double-sided mirror, suspended from the ceiling, divides the his (the shower side) and hers (the sunken tub side) vanity. **ABOVE** Like most of the house, the exterior of the master bedroom pod is clad in teak panels. The exterior of the office and kids' bedrooms, however, is covered in smooth, gray, steel-troweled plaster.