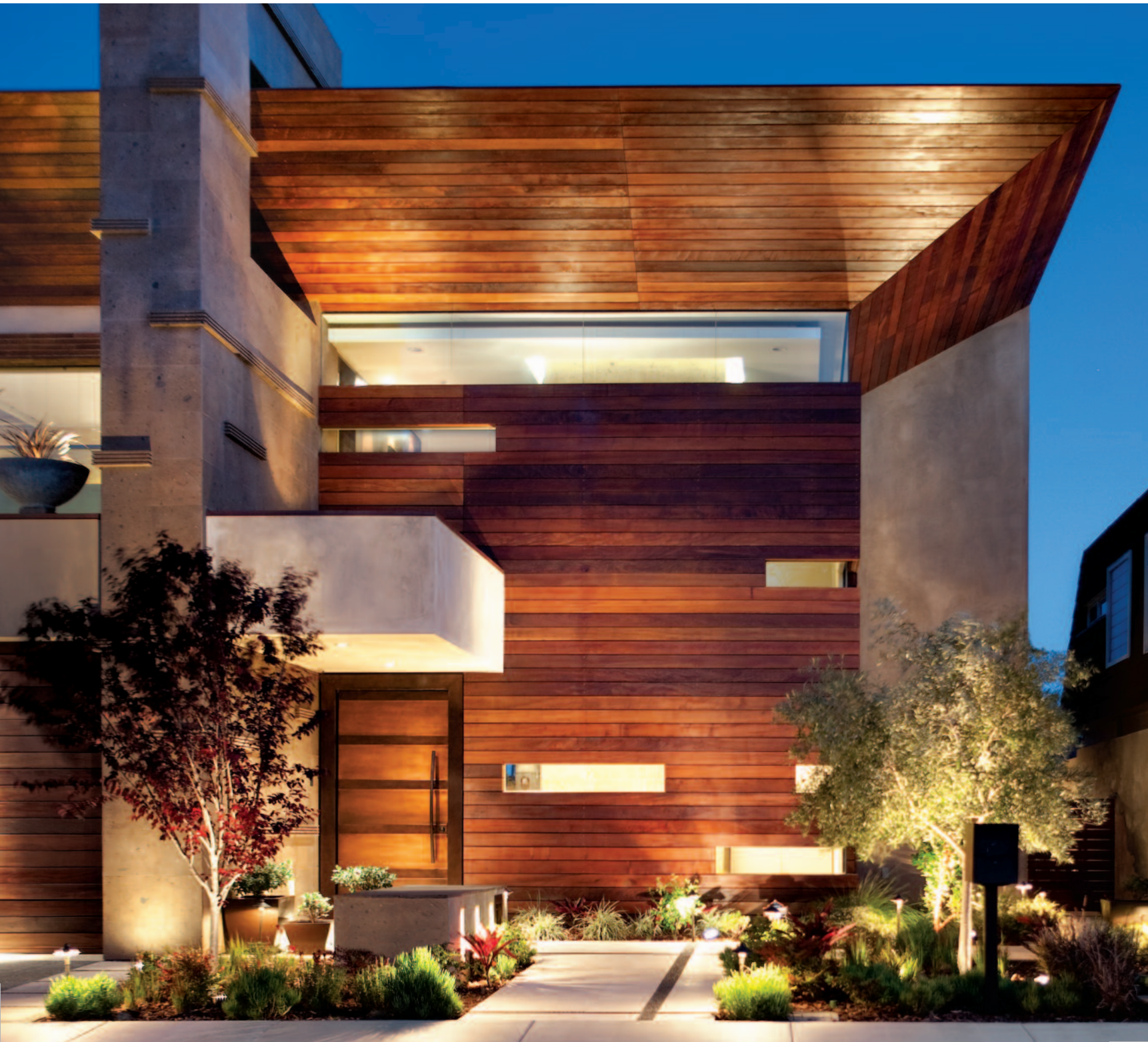


SAN DIEGO

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## OPEN DIALOGUE

WRITTEN BY IRENE LACHER  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM BRADY

WHEN A TIJUANA, MEXICO-BASED REAL ESTATE INVESTOR SPOTTED A DOUBLE LOT ON SAN DIEGO BAY IN A RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITY KNOWN FOR ITS ABUNDANCE OF RESIDENTIAL DOCKS, HE KNEW A GOOD DEAL WHEN HE SAW IT—EVEN THOUGH IT WOULD BE ANOTHER 17 YEARS BEFORE HE ACTUALLY BUILT ON IT. He bought the land for his retirement home, spurning offers from buyers year after year. But building turned out to be more complicated than buying: He and his wife had very different ideas about what the home should look like.

While the husband favors design with clean contemporary lines, his wife prefers the traditional hacienda style of their native Mexico. To solve the conundrum, they hired Tijuana-based architect Rodolfo Aguilar, who knows both communities well, having grown up in Mexico and summered in San Diego's Coronado Cays. Aguilar brought in his sometime collaborator, Tijuana designer Pedro Garcia de Leon Fimbres, for what would become their biggest project yet: a sprawling retreat for which they formed a partnership, AGLarchitecture, to handle the stateside commission.

It took two years for the plans to evolve, but eventually the designers forged a meeting of the minds. "This house is a combination of everything," says the owner, who spends half the year here. "We call it 'rustic modern.'" Thus, bronze-colored cantera stone from Queréta was used on the interior and exterior walls; the pool area and balcony floors were made from conchuela stone—cream-colored fossilized coral studded with white shells, similar to material used to construct the Mayan pyramids—from the Yucatán Peninsula; and custom-colored orange-red clay bricks and

<b>ARCHITECTURE</b>	Rodolfo Aguilar, AGLarchitecture
<b>INTERIOR DESIGN</b>	Pedro Garcia de Leon Fimbres, AGLarchitecture and Elizabeth Monforte de Encinas, Unique Final Touch
<b>KITCHEN DESIGN</b>	Lisa Wilson-Wirth, CKD, Arclinea San Diego
<b>HOME BUILDER</b>	Dan Arenas, Mitchell D. Burton Construction, Inc.
<b>BEDROOMS</b>	3
<b>BATHROOMS</b>	5
<b>SQUARE FEET</b>	5,750



#### SLICE OF LIFE

The leather sectional from Roche Bobois seats a sizeable gathering of 10. The beige, rust and charcoal-colored custom wool rug, which sits atop a rustic wooden coffee table from De Benedictis, is from M. Austin Designer Floors. Both the Kirkwood mahogany side table and the Santomer dining table of reclaimed Brazilian peroba rosa are from Environment Furniture. A Rufino Tamayo still life hangs in the adjacent dining area.



#### SOLID FOUNDATION

The foyer is anchored by the elevator shaft, encased in cantera stone, which is circled by a DuChateau antique reproduction wood-floor staircase. The main door, a custom piece by designer Pedro Garcia de Leon Fimbres, has a dark copper satin finish.

brown stucco manufactured in Tecate add visual interest to the exterior. The construction team was international as well, with San Diego-based Mitchell D. Burton Construction splitting the chores with artisans commuting from Baja, Mexico.

The natural materials inspired a palette of earth tones that the designers contrasted with pale hues that harmonize with the sunny waterfront ambience. "We needed to balance the warmth and the freshness," says Garcia de Leon Fimbres. The marine conditions also influenced the decision to forgo difficult-to-maintain paint in favor of eclectic natural materials combined to create color and texture.

Indeed, minimal upkeep was high on the owner's list, so he nixed a flat roof, common in contemporary geometric design, to avoid the kinds of leaks that sometimes plague his Tijuana home. Aguilar created the illusion of a flat roof while keeping his client happy by designing a dramatic inverted sloping canopy clad in durable Brazilian ipe wood.



**TRICKED OUT**

Durable Brazilian ipe wood clads the front façade of the home, whose inverted sloping canopy serves as a trompe l'oeil of a modernist flat roof. Perpendicular to the façade is a structural wall of cantera stone, intersected by a horizontal plane of stucco, creating a mix of textures and colors without paint, which doesn't stand up well to the area's salty ocean breezes.



**SHINING STAR**

Arclinea San Diego's custom-designed Convivium cabinetry in teak and stainless steel hides storage areas and equipment behind wood paneling and bronzed Stopsol glass doors. The kitchen island is topped by honed Italian marble from Tutto Marmo and paired with walnut and polished brass barstools from Hold It Contemporary Home, both in San Diego. Appliances are from Wolf, Sub Zero, Dacor, Bosch and Miele.

Inside the home, a Crestron system controls various electronics—TVs, motorized shades, lighting, alarm, temperature, pool controls and Internet—requiring only the simplest instructions from the users. Clutter is minimized by Central Media Systems' ReQuest technology, which stores hi-definition movies and music playable on any of the home's seven television screens. Of course, some old-fashioned perks of gracious living also came into play inside the home. Says San Diego interior designer Elizabeth Monforte de Encinas of Unique Final Touch, who worked with Aguilar, Garcia de Leon Fimbres and the owners on selecting furnishings and art: "The concept for the entire project is refined simplicity—surroundings with art, color and a collection of wonderful memories that personalize this particular home design."



#### ROUGH AND TUMBLE

Nubby, sand-colored Harsey & Harsey fabric from San Diego-based Alonso's Upholstery covers both the master suite bed and a bench found at Designers Gallery Ltd. The night tables, made of reclaimed Brazilian peroba rosa with a mahogany veneer and black granite tops, are from Environment Furniture's Lotus Collection. Hand-hammered bronze table lamps shed light on the custom-covered leather club chair and ottoman, both from Blake House.



#### CLOSET CASE

In the master suite, clothing is encased in cedar and clear glass doors lining two walls. In the far end are his-and-hers marble showers, commodes and sinks. Marble also tops the custom maple vanity, with a pop-up mirror designed by Garcia de Leon Fimbres. The acrylic stool from Designers Gallery Ltd. is upholstered in Ultrasuede.

But the heart of house is still its hearth, smartly configured by kitchen designer Lisa Wilson-Wirth—design principal and owner of Arclinea San Diego, local purveyor of the Italian made-to-order kitchen collection by architect Antonio Citterio—in collaboration with Aguilar and Garcia de Leon Fimbres. The kitchen opens onto the dining room, allowing the cook to enjoy gathered company; after the work is done, the mess disappears behind pocket and swinging doors. This center stage for large family gatherings uses teak, glass, stainless steel and honed marble to express the couple's different aesthetics, and is a succinct visual synopsis of the home's entire design plan. Says Wirth: "They really embraced the idea of taking warm materials and using them in very contemporary ways." **L**