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CULTURAL REVOLUTION

ARCHITECT

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Low embodied energy, natural, local and non-toxic materials of pigmented stucco, unpainted plaster and concrete, bonderized sheet metal, syndecrete, translucent glass, beech flooring and exposed vertical grain fir cabinets comprise the palette for this house.



The 7,500 sq. ft. house is a case study in innovative environmental materials, methods and systems. Features include a solar domestic pool and radiant heating for slate floors, natural ventilation strategies, including heat recovery and exhaust by solar chimney, engineered wood products, trusses and steel framing, recycled lumber, high performance heat mirror glazing, cotton insulation and zero-VOC paint.

Cool Efficiency in Bel Air

by Michael Webb

DAVID HERTZ ESTABLISHED HIS SANTA Monica firm, Syndesis, in 1984, after graduating from SCI-Arc, apprenticing to John Lautner, and interning with Frank Gehry. Some admirers of his inventive, environmentally sensitive houses wish he had devoted more time to architecture and less to the production and marketing of Syndecrete®, his patented lightweight concrete, which he has employed for kitchens, bathrooms and commercial spaces. Though important as a demonstration of how waste materials can be recycled and used for integral decoration, it has distracted him from building and (as he now acknowledges) can realize its full potential only if it is licensed for mass production.

However, Hertz's practice is now surging, and one of his more exciting achievements is the 7,500 sq. ft. house he recently completed in Bel Air. Entrepreneur Keith Lehrer (formerly a drummer in the

punk rock band Circle Jerks and now CEO of an eyeglass company) gave the architect a free hand, asking only that he create a calming, ordered space that would serve as a restorative after his frequent business trips. He applauded the architect's concern to make energy efficiency one of the determinants of the design, which involved a radical remodel of the existing 1950s ranch house. The street façade is reticent, but the interior opens up in back through walls of glass to hills and a distant view of downtown. Existing trees at the edge of the lawn were removed to leave a solitary pine, sculpted by a Japanese gardener. The pool leads one's gaze to the reservoir at the base of the canyon.

Throughout the house, there is a constant alternation of tight enclosure and unfettered space, and a Japanese aesthetic that infuses the simplest forms. Cubist fireplaces, furnishings, and art works

enrich expansive surfaces and serve as scaling devices. From the stone-flagged entry, which suggests a rock crevice, one steps into a loft-like living area with a sunken seating area that allows an unbroken view of the horizon from across the room. An intimate dining area, open kitchen and family room are tucked in beneath the second-floor master suite, and a skylit corridor leads to a library and guest rooms.

A curved wall, covered in steel-troweled black cement, cuts through the house,







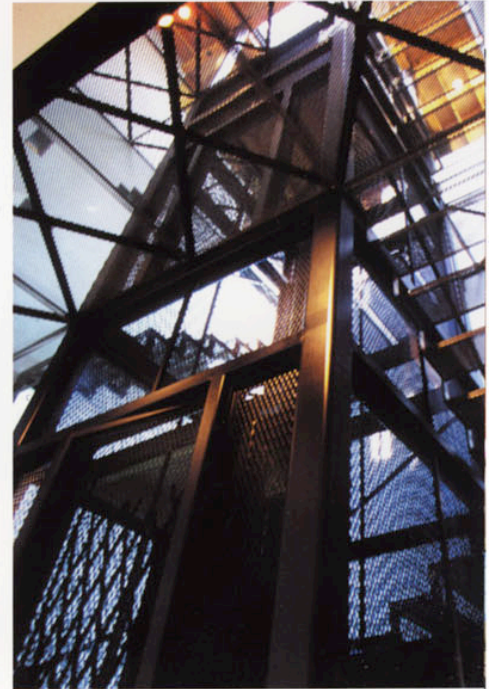
The roof of the living room and master bedroom (left) are constructed out of recycled timbers, detailed to create an exposed and honest expression of the framing and structural system and their connections.

dividing the high volumes from the low, and doubling as a south-facing wall for heat collection. This plays off crisp white and Syndeconcrete®-clad walls, floors of wide-planked beech or polished concrete, an exposed ceiling vault of fir beams, and handsome built-in cabinets. Stairs and an elevator cage of perforated steel lead up to the master suite and a rooftop belvedere. This open shaft serves as a solar chimney that evacuates hot air, or recirculates it through a heat recovery ventilator and the open steel truss ductless plenum of the second floor.

Light floods or filters in from every side, blurring the divide between house and landscape, and three skylit glass cylinders pull light down to the kitchen. The dining room looks into a walled Zen garden that shuts out the forecourt. Hertz designed a table in the form of a wooden slab that can be raised and lowered hydraulically, allowing guests to be

seated on floor cushions or on Jacobsen chairs. Scrim-shaded ceiling lights provide a soft glow at night. The white cubist sculptures of Kasimir Malevich, which the artist dubbed “prouns,” may have inspired the geometric cutaways of steel-troweled and waxed plaster on a wood frame that surround the fireplace in the library. Their blocky forms conceal speakers and shelves.

On the second floor, a gallery overlooks the living room, and wire strings that can be bowed like a giant bass are mounted on a section of the curved wall that leads on to a gym and music room. The master bedroom is cantilevered over a terrace and juts into the treetops to maximize views. Hertz designed the platform bed with its flaps and side tables of straight grain fir, integrating this with the room. Foliage casts its shadows on the translucent glass of the bathroom and dressing area. ■



The 40' perforated steel, woven wire fabric and mesh stair and elevator core creates an open shaft which is used as a solar chimney to exhaust and recover heat which collects at the high ceilings of the living room and master bedroom.

CLIENT: Keith Lehrer

ARCHITECT: Syndesis, Inc.—David Randall
Hertz, AIA; Sergio Zeballos; David Thompson

MODEL: Al Binn

CONTRACTOR: Michael MacDowell

STRUCTURAL: Parker/Resnick

MECHANICAL: RA Marks

LANDSCAPING: Robert Cornell + Associates

PHOTOGRAPHY: Tom Bonner

MANUFACTURERS/SUPPLIERS: Trus Joist
MacMillan; Southwall Technologies; Carrier Corporation; Scholfield Solar; Glidden Paint Company; Post-Consumer Products

