

U.T. SAN DIEGO

# Coastal

SAN DIEGO HOMES

## A FRESH ANGLE

RETRACTABLE DIAGONAL WALL ADDS NEW DIMENSION  
TO LA JOLLA HOME'S INDOOR-OUTDOOR SPACE

MARCH 2013

# SIMPLY BALANCED

## RETRACTABLE GLASS WALL PIVOT POINT OF RECTANGULAR CASA DIAGONAL

**MARTINA SCHIMITSCHEK**

SPECIAL TO THE U-T

**S**implicity.

That was the goal for the Modernist house perched on the side of Mount Soledad, overlooking the Pacific.

"We wanted a simple, straightforward house that pays homage to the view," said one of the two homeowners, who wish to remain anonymous.

The only other requirement the couple had was that the master bedroom stays on same floor as the living areas.

Working on a steep slope and within the confines of coastal height restrictions, architect Taal Safdie, of the husband-and-wife firm Safdie Rabines Architects, created Casa Diagonal. The 3,700-square-foot, two-story home is named after the retractable glass wall that cuts diagonally across the length of rectangular structure. Indoor and outdoor spaces unite seamlessly when the sliding glass panels are opened and stacked to the sides.

This ingenious geometric design creates a large

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Indoor and outdoor spaces flow together when the sliding glass doors of the diagonal wall that faces ocean are opened in this La Jolla home. The homeowners wanted a simple design where the view takes center stage. DENNIS VIERA • Viera Photographics

## COASTAL SAN DIEGO HOMES



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Muralist designs Del Mar home so everything is in its space.

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Outdoor area expanded to include lap pool and play area.

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Walnut panels add warmth to the kitchen area, which is designed to keep clutter out of the way (above). A skylight illuminates the different levels of the sandstone wall (below) turning the blocks into a work of art. DENNIS VIERA • Viera Photographics photos

## La Jolla

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deck in the dining-living area, while allowing more indoor space for the master bedroom. A low glass wall serves as the railing, creating unobstructed views of La Jolla Shores. The property faces north avoiding the direct westerly winds and afternoon sun. With no overhead wires or cars in the sightline, the view creates a peaceful ambience for the terrace.

Inside, the palette is subdued with natural materials that reflect the surroundings. Walnut wood panels, used on the length of the back wall and on the ceiling of the main living area, mirror the color of the bluffs.

"There's a lot of glass," Safdie said "They definitely wanted a concrete floor, so we needed a balance

of warmth on the back wall and ceiling."

From the long breakfast bar to the low-slung Spanish-made sofa, the lines in the space run horizontally down the length of the room drawing the eye to the interior as well as the view.

"Nothing is random. Everything is symmetrical and balanced," said the husband, pointing out how the breaks in the glass railing line up with the grooves between the concrete floor tiles. "People don't notice it. But you feel it."

Separating the living and dining spaces is a concrete fire box, which is lined up with a matching one on the terrace. Clean-burning bioethanol eliminates the need for a chimney.

The custom-made dining table in the shape of a guitar pick reflects the configuration of the room. The table,

which seats eight, was crafted by local artist Jamie Huffman of Surface Furniture using Calcutta gold marble for the top and steel for the base.

In the kitchen, orange bar stools and a matching orange "Eat" sign on the wall punctuate the muted color palette. The homeowners said the kitchen is where the family gathers and cooks, so they wanted it to be integrated with the rest of the room.

To keep the lines clean, Safdie designed an alcove for the refrigerator, the oven, appliances and the pantry. "The idea was that since the kitchen was open to the dining room, it doesn't feel like a kitchen," Safdie said.

Room to showcase the couple's art collection was also part of the design plan. Space was created for an installation by local sculptor Matt Devine -



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“Aesthetics have always been part of our life,” said one of the two homeowners. Artwork includes an “urban gritty” piece by Larry Graeber of San Antonio, Texas, (far left) and a steel stick installation by local sculptor Matt Devine (left).

## La Jolla

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a wall-mounted piece created from steel sticks.

On the western end of the living area, a two-story sandstone wall anchors the steel staircase to the lower floor, which includes a family room and three bedrooms. Lit by a skylight in the stairwell, the wall itself is a sculpture with blocks in three different finishes. Each finish is mounted at a different depth to create both texture and dimension.

The homeowners, who admit the wall took them out of their comfort zone at first, now love the way the light changes the stone’s colors throughout the day.

The wall also serves to organize the flow of the home. The backside of the wall leads into the master bedroom and the attached bathroom. A small, opaque window in the corner of the bedroom opens to the bathtub

and a west-facing window, bringing sunsets into the bedroom.

“The view grounds me,” the second homeowner said. It’s clearly the focal point throughout the home. Built on concrete posts against the side of a steep slope, the house – which is essentially two rectangular boxes on top of each other – feels like it floats above the ground.

The home, which was completed in August 2011, meets land at the top of the slope with an unassuming facade, which is layered and designed to create light and privacy. Keeping materials to a minimum throughout the residence, the exterior uses the same design elements as the interior, including the uneven sandstone wall.

“This is about classic Modernism,” the homeowner said. “In 15 to 20 years, this will still be contemporary. This will never be dated.”

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The street-facing windows in the kitchen are kept low for privacy while bringing in natural light. The white counters are a nonporous surface called Chroma Quartz by Pental. It is a combination of at least 90 percent quartz and resin. DENNIS VIERA

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