

Sunset Outdoor Living

126

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and retreats



Display until September 25, 2007
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New heights

With decks and balconies, a San Diego remodel soars over a leafy canyon

"LIKE A LITTLE RED RUBY perched on the edge of a green canyon." That's how Tod Clark describes the home he shares with his wife, Lisa Loftus, in San Diego's Mission Hills. From the interior, the structure feels like an elegant treehouse—glass doors slide into wall pockets, allowing the fronds of the surrounding Phoenix palms to extend inside on two floors. "On warm evenings, we slide the doors wide open and look down into the canyon, where we see foxes, coyotes, hawks, and falcons," Clark says.

Next to the house, a graceful path curves down the slope past a gable-roofed storage shed to a concrete deck, which features a built-in bench seat, a gas-fed firepit, and a sheltering palm tree ringed with a custom-designed bar. "We call it the Saturn Bar, after the rings of Saturn," Clark says. The deck makes an ideal spot for entertaining friends.

DESIGN Safdie Rabines Architects, San Diego (www.safdierabines.com or 619/297-6153) >52

INSPIRATIONS

Cable railings provide safety without interrupting views into the deep ravine. Downhill nearby, feathery papyrus complements the look of the palms, ferns, and other tropicals.



Porches



VIVID RED SETS OFF THE UPPER STORIES OF THE HOUSE, MAKING THEM APPEAR TO FLOAT IN THE TREES

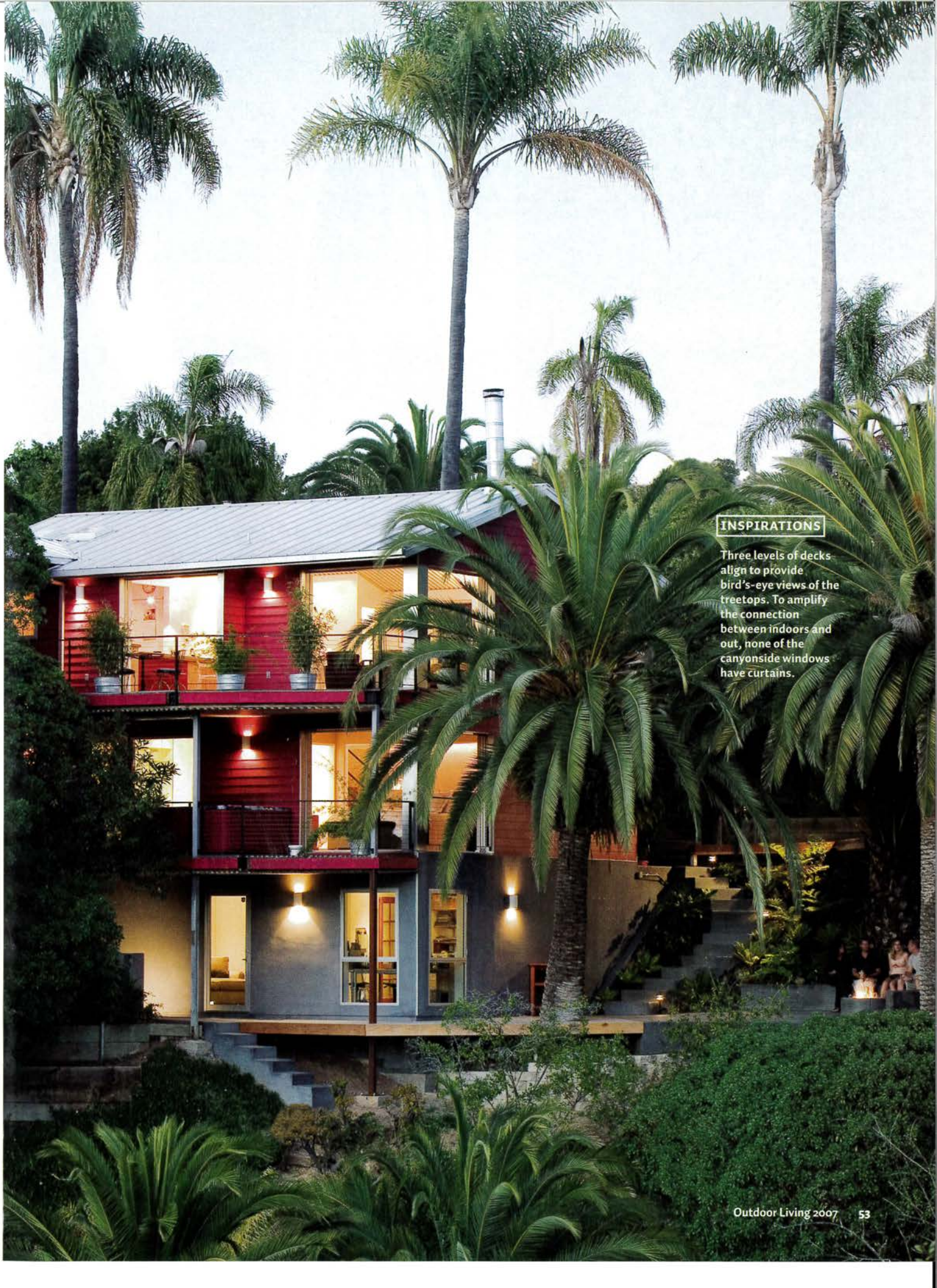
Lessons from this landscape

Make creative use of tight space On the narrow entertaining patio, retaining walls serve as seating, and a metal ring on the palm trunk is a wine bar.

Include curves In a natural setting, a straight line feels too hard. Here, outside spaces are softened by curves in a stairway of cast concrete and a circular firepit and its surrounding seat wall.

Carve out flat areas A small deck and bottom-level patio offer outside sitting areas, and a 10-by-10-foot platform to the side provides room for a storage shed.

Add drama with lights Aimed up into palm fronds, lights create a sculptural green umbrella. Elsewhere, rope lights routed into the underside of the railing add an indirect, diffused glow.



INSPIRATIONS

Three levels of decks align to provide bird's-eye views of the treetops. To amplify the connection between indoors and out, none of the canyon-side windows have curtains.