

INTERNATIONAL
ARCHITECTURE
& DESIGN

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HOT!

*A RELAXED MALIBU BEACH HOUSE
A RUSTIC EAST COAST COTTAGE
A SUNNY SPANISH VILLA*



OPEN
HOUSE

OLD TRICKS
TO MODERNIZE,
BRING LIGHT IN,
ALLOW
HOMES
EMBRACE
OUTDOORS

ARCHITECT BING THOM'S
URBAN VISION

AWARD-WINNING DESIGNS

ALL ABOUT THE

BEACH

FOR A MALIBU BEACH HOUSE, A CANADIAN ARCHITECT PROVIDED AN INTRIGUING CURVED ROOFLINE AND A RELAXED MODERN VIBE.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY UNDINE PRÖHL





Opposite: A wooden walkway—slightly raised, bridge style, over the garden—extends the length of the yard from the entrance of the home to a guest house and two-car garage (not shown) at the front of the property. In the area between the two structures, a dining patio, a lush garden and a water-lily pond comprise an outdoor living space.

Top: A panorama of the sea is proffered from the atrium upon entry to the home. Stucco privacy fencing lines the east and west sides of the pool deck out to the beach-side border of the property, but the ocean is in full view beyond a tempered-glass screen designed for wind loads (*also at left*).

TO

be sure, a beach house should enjoy spectacular light and views. The challenge was to build these into the design for this Malibu weekend home, yet create maximum privacy from its neighbours—which sit a mere six feet away on either side of an unusually narrow 33-foot-wide lot within a colony of similarly slim lots. Still, rather than play down the property's linear dimension, the architects chose to emphasize it in their design of this contemporary California house, completed in 2009.

"We decided the circulation through the house should *feel* long and



Above: Bamboo planted along the east side of the property creates a "green wall" that allows light in but maintains privacy. Broad, shallow steps are part of a shift in levels that continues through the house, enhancing the impression that it is composed of many distinct areas. The flooring is Pierre de Chanceaux limestone, used in various sizes throughout on floors and walls.





Opposite, right: The corridor linking the front to the back of the house is almost eight feet wide, and the three-storey height gives it an added sense of spaciousness. Built-in shelving provides display space for pieces of the owners' large art collection.

This page, top: The tall vertical columns that line the glass atrium wall and the spokes that span the ceiling are left exposed to show the structural makeup of the house and are veneered in teak for a uniform look. The architects worked with their contractor and a metal worker who experimented with mock-ups of slats of varying widths to render the shading effect they wanted for the teak ceiling slats.

This page, bottom: Three of the four materials from the architects' strict palette are represented in the sleek living room: Australian walnut, which wraps from the wall over the fireplace onto the ceiling to create an intimate seating area; a roughened limestone in a grid pattern on the hearth surround (designed by the architects), paired with the more refined honed-limestone floor on the main level; and a backdrop of white walls, against which glass display shelves all but disappear. The fireplace conceals a flat-screen TV on a lift that rises up above the mantel. The living room is at the back of the house, where it affords a full-length view of the pool and, beyond, the Pacific Ocean.

narrow," says Taal Safdie, a Montreal native who, with her husband, Ricardo Rabines, heads up the San Diego-based firm Safdie Rabines Architects. The architects placed the main corridor, two staircases and a mezzanine within an atrium that runs along most of the east side of the building and is open above to the home's full three-storey height. Rooms on both upper and lower levels span the length of the corridors, tucked away behind partial walls that both obscure and reveal them. Heading up the stairs, you're greeted at the top with a view out to the water; when you go downstairs, as you reach the bottom, the garden is spread out before you. And upon entering the house, you look down the elongated vista of the airy atrium and the ocean is straight ahead.

The narrow house needed as much volume as possible within its lofty dimension, so the architects gave it a distinctive vaulted roof, which maximizes space on the upper floor and adds to the expansive feel of the atrium. The vaulted roof has a softer, less traditional look than a peaked roof, Safdie says. In Malibu, where there is a mix of very traditional and very modern homes—many of them extremely formal in look and many unique—this home's roofline and warm woods are the features that most set it apart. Here, the two elements come together: fixed teak slats across the curved glass ceiling and extending partway down the wall temper the vast scale of the atrium space and create a warmer look than a glass-enclosed house would ordinarily have. They also provide shade and, Safdie notes, cast





Above: In the kitchen, Blue Jeans granite, which resembles marble and, observes Safdie, "looks like the ocean," covers the counters and part of the backsplash, flanked by panels of blue glass. The island's generous curved shape references the roofline. The public spaces on the main level are entirely open to each other, but the dining room and kitchen are slightly raised above the living area, creating some sense of separation. A bedroom is tucked behind the kitchen, with a den at the front of the house, facing the garden.

Right: Each of the five bathrooms was given its own character with a particular type of stone. The powder room boasts Blue Tiger Eye mosaic slabs, but here in the master bath, Pierre de Chanceaux limestone, which has a mottled pattern reminiscent of a sandy beach, lines the walls and the shower floor. In combination with the other materials—Wild Blue Agate slab vanity top; teak ceiling vault, floor and cabinetry; and a glass shower wall spanning the length of the room—the effect merges airy beach-house casual with spa-style luxe.

"really beautiful shadows that change throughout the day."

The nature of a weekend home should be simplicity itself, offering a place one can occupy for short periods without much planning or need for alteration. Complicating things a little, the owners had never before lived in a modern home; and while the husband was game for the experience, the wife specified that the house had to be "extra warm."

The architects responded by assembling a limited palette of materials, an idea that serves and also reinforces the philosophy of simplicity. The entire ground floor is covered in limestone, with a roughened version skirting the pool; the pale sand colour ties in nicely with the beach surroundings. Two woods are in use: teak for the wooden beams in the atrium, built-in cabinetry, and the furniture and finishes in the master bedroom; and Australian walnut, which has the warm, reddish tones of teak but with a more distinctive grain, creating interest on the display cabinetry in the living room, kitchen and dining area. Together, the woods provide warmth within a sleek modern aesthetic. All else in the house is painted white; there's no desire to fight with the setting. The main event, after all, is the outdoors: the garden and the ocean, and a view of one or the other can be had from any spot in the house. It doesn't get much simpler than that. ●





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The ocean-facing back of the house is a floor-to-ceiling glass wall on both levels. On the second floor, the master bedroom has a walkout to a private deck with a glass-panel railing in the same style as the one fronting the pool below. The vaulted ceiling reinforces the sense of space in the room and amplifies the view of sea and sky.