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# THE HOUSE THAT HERTZ BUILT

Architect David Hertz's Venice home is as green as it is stylish.

By Michael Webb

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TIM STREET-PORTER

Memories of Bali and the tropics inspired architect David Hertz to design an open, breezy, surf-close house in Venice for his family.





Sophie pulls a beehive barstool (left) up to the Syndeconcrete kitchen counter for a snack with dad David and mom Stacy. Light washes the living room (right), where Max, 8, displays a painting. The family's antique toy collection (below) decorates the house.



**A**MID VENICE'S ENCLAVES OF CANALS AND leafy walkways, architect David Hertz has created his own piece of paradise. Inspired by memories of Bali and breezy, open-sided houses, Hertz recently added a kind of lanai to the house he built ten years ago for his family. Occupying the adjoining lot, the two-story addition anticipates the needs of three growing children and the possibility of bringing his practice home.

"I enjoy being outdoors more than in, and nature was my guide in designing this shelter," says Hertz, whose shock of dark hair and restless energy make him look a lot younger than 44. You get the sense he'd rather be surfing or hiking than sitting still. He grew up beside the ocean, became an environmental activist early on as a lifeguard, and now teaches the Ecology of Design course at UCLA.

The house and new addition push to the outer edges of the double lot, enclosing inner courtyards. Bridges link the second-floor spaces, and a lap pool sits between. The house feels like a village, where artful fences and stands of bamboo create privacy. And it can accommodate a village: recently 1,500 people crowded in for a fashion show staged on a runway over the pool.

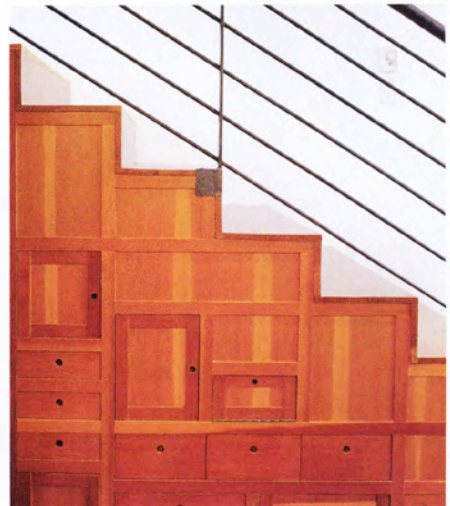
As an apprentice to the late John Lautner, the visionary protégé of Frank Lloyd Wright, and an intern with Frank Gehry, Hertz learned from two quirky masters before opening his own office, Syndesis, in Santa Monica in 1984. I first met him in the late 1980s when he graduated from patio furniture and interiors to build his first ground-up house: a lofty live-work space for artist Susan Venable on Venice Boulevard. Raw and rough-textured, alternately soaring and intimate, it was a bold sketch for the projects to follow.

Early on, Hertz developed Syndeconcrete, a lightweight concrete using fly ash and carpet fiber, employing it for bathtubs, countertops, and, on a larger scale, for his courtyard paving and the VIP lounge of the refurbished Dodger Stadium. Light, ecologically responsible, maintenance-free Syndeconcrete is a metaphor for the buildings Hertz creates. Twelve years ago, he and his wife, Stacy Fong, who trained as an architect and now manages Syndesis, went hunting for a site close to the beach. "We stumbled on this 40-by-90-foot lot and made a wild offer that was accepted," he recalls.









The addition (left) blends seamlessly with the original house; the new outdoor shower (top); a breezeway (center) connects the two wings. Under-stair tansu chest-style storage (bottom).





Bright color and family art punctuate the serene and private master bedroom (opposite) and boys' room (this page).



Just hangin' out, Stacy, Max, Collin, Sophie, and David gather on the patio outside the second-story master bedroom, and warm up around the firepit in the newly created first-floor seating area (opposite).

“Escrow was contingent on financing, and I had to do the plans in 90 days in order to secure the building permit we needed to get a construction loan. As the house was going up, we began to wonder if we could afford to live here, but we had to keep going. When you’re surfing, your instinct is to flee from a huge wave, but you can’t fight the current so you defy the odds and go towards it. If you stop, you’re wiped out.”

Though the house was conceived and built in a year on a tight budget, every part of it was designed to respond to the path of the sun, the prevailing breezes, and the alternation between warm days and cool, foggy nights. To confirm that he had achieved the most effective cross ventilation, Hertz even set off smoke bombs at a late stage in the construction to observe air movements. High-performance glass cuts 70

percent of the heat gain and retains warmth when the outside temperature drops—this allowed the architect to use more than twice as much glass for windows and skylights as the California building code usually permits. Insulated glass costs about 20 percent more than standard grades, but pays for itself in reduced fuel bills and the savings on mechanical equipment like air conditioners—as well as the space such equipment occupies.

“This house doesn’t say ‘Look at me, how efficient I am,’” says Hertz. “You have to know that or experience it.” You know you are somewhere special as soon as you step inside. The last rays of the sun suffuse the glass fins that punctuate a massive wall and cast streaks of greenish light across the room. Windows on every side frame palm trees and feathery clusters of bamboo. At a Syndecrete bar, guests sit on springy stools and sip mugs of exotic tea. Though the furnishings are spare and the surfaces hard, there’s a comfort level few houses achieve.

It’s half cave, half tree house, and an adventure playground for the children—Collin, 12, Sophie, 11, and Max, 8. You may find them skateboarding across the radiant-heated concrete floor or hanging out in an open-sided mezzanine workspace between the (Hertz, continued on page 128)

