

# perch perfect

After years of designing other people's dream homes, architect *Mark Rios* finally gets to build one for himself

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THE JAPANESE-INSPIRED HOUSE  
MARK RIOS SHARES WITH HIS HUSBAND,  
DR. GUY RINGLER, OCCUPIES A PRIME  
HILLSIDE IN LOS ANGELES'S BEL AIR  
NEIGHBORHOOD. FOR DETAILS SEE SOURCES.







LINENS BY CHAZ STEVENS  
DESIGN SWATHE THE  
GUESTHOUSE BED. 1960S  
LAMP. **OPPOSITE** IN THE  
JAPANESE-STYLE SPA, A  
WOOD TUB OVERLOOKS THE  
SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS.  
THE SIDE TABLE (LEFT) AND  
ANTIQUE STOOL ARE FROM  
CHARLES JACOBSEN.







1

he house was just about ideal. A midcentury-modern gem sitting on a secluded acre in Bel Air, complete with a dazzling view of the Pacific Ocean . . . idyllic but for one small detail: It was slowly sinking. There was no hope for repair, so architect Mark Rios and his husband, fertility doctor Guy Ringler, decided to tear down the house they'd lived in for 15 years and start anew. For the first time in his 30-year career, Rios, a founding partner of the architecture firm Rios Clementi Hale Studios, was building a home for himself.

"Architects have a hard time designing for themselves," he says with a laugh. "I went through over 50 plans before we settled on one." In seeking to create a tranquil haven away from the couple's chaotic professional lives, Rios drew inspiration from the soothing aesthetics of Japanese design. "The library, in particular," the architect notes, "was fashioned

after a room in Kyoto, using heavy, dark timbers. And the spa resembles old *ryokans* I've visited in Japan."

Like much of Rios's work, the new 11,000-square-foot home is tightly edited, with a restrained palette and a carefully orchestrated repetition of materials. While the street front is composed of three white, windowless masses, on the back Rios utilized floor-to-ceiling glass pocket doors that open rooms to outdoor spaces and southwest views. (These expanses give a sense of airy openness to the two large rooms that occupy the first floor of the house.) Rios also built a rooftop party/screening room with a large terrace, "which makes it fun to entertain," he says.

"I was more experimental and did more in the detailing with this home than I've done for past clients," the architect says. Rios employed subtle indulgences throughout the house. He designed all the hardware himself. The wood flooring came from Germany, where it underwent a special drying process in giant kilns to make it softer and more tactile. The living room ceiling was lacquered to animate the light, especially at sunset. All doors are a luxurious two-and-a-quarter inches thick and



“I’m totally obsessed with proportions and exact measurements,” *Rios* says.

SUTHERLAND FURNITURE  
OUTFITS THE TERRACE  
AND POOL PAVILION.  
OPPOSITE RIOS IN HIS  
OFFICE, WHERE JAPANESE  
FABRIC PANELS ARE  
DISPLAYED ON A WALL  
CLAD IN A PHILLIP  
JEFFRIES GRASS CLOTH.  
CHAIR BY WILLIAM HAINES.







GROOMING BY CHRISTINA BUZAS. USING ORIBE FOR ABTP



rise to the ceilings to add dramatic scale and loftiness to the rooms. Walls are 18 inches thick and clad in double layers of drywall to ensure a restful hush. “I’m totally obsessed with proportions and exact measurements, down to the inch,” Rios explains. “They change how a house feels.”

A true believer in less is more, Rios shares his philosophy: “So many fashionable houses are filled with beautiful objets d’art that scream, ‘Look at me! I’m wonderful!’ These houses have a lot going on. Our house is the opposite. We’ve kept it simple.”

Still, the couple live with carefully chosen treasures, a mix of their two aesthetics: California Impressionist paintings, glassware by American designer Dorothy Thorpe, and ceramics by Martha Longenecker and husband-and-wife trailblazers Otto and Gertrud Natzler. Traditional Japanese doorway cloths blanket a wall in Rios’s office, and a cheerful collection of vintage Blenko glass adds a splash of color in the den. Outside, Rios, obsessed with yellow, has planted 85 different golden-flowered or -variegated species in the garden and along the property’s winding paths.

Building his own place has influenced how Rios builds homes for others. “One of the responsibilities of an architect or designer is to learn to say no to a client, sweetly and politely. Clients always have a wish list. Often they try to do too much, and you just have to say, ‘That’s a wonderful idea, but let’s save it for the next house.’ This process has improved my skills as both editor and curator. Houses that have a lot of things going on feel insecure to me, while the houses with less feel more confident. After working here, I’m more convinced than ever of the importance of the courage it takes to say no and do less.” ▲

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