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# CALIFORNIA *designin'*



Although the suburban ranch house has gotten its share of abuse, its roots lie in the now very-popular California Modernist tradition of residential design. In fashion layouts, Hollywood movies, and numerous coffee-table books the clean looks of historical Modern houses from the '40s and '50s are all the rage. (Now, to East Coasters, 50 years or so does not sound historical, but for California—especially the Southern part—it certainly is!) These styles appeal today for good reasons: lots of glass, seamless connection between indoors and

*By Julie D. Taylor*





THE UMANSKY RESIDENCE IS NOT ONLY FILLED WITH ART, BUT THE HOUSE ITSELF EXUDES SCULPTURAL QUALITIES. (ABOVE) THE FAMILY-ORIENTED POOL HAS AN INTERNAL WALL DIVIDING THE SHALLOW AND DEEP ENDS. (ABOVE, RIGHT) WOOD-FRAMED GLASS WALLS SLIDE INTO WALL POCKETS AND COMPLETELY DISAPPEAR TO OPEN THE HOUSE TO THE OUTDOORS. (RIGHT) IN THE OPEN PLAN, ALL THE ROOMS FLOW TOGETHER.



outdoors, rooms that easily flow into each other, a feeling of carefree living. Today's designers are taking these ideas and creating highly livable spaces for families of all types.

In fact, many of the ideas that originated in California—such as outdoor living—have been adapted all over the country, as more and more attention is paid to outdoor rooms, patios, decks and the like. And, if



weather makes enjoying the outdoors impossible, broad expanses of glass always bring the beauty of nature inside.

Contrary to many beliefs, Modern doesn't need to be cold and hard. We'll show you houses that use the Modern principles in materials such as stone and wood, which lend a natural alternative to steel and concrete.

California is also known for its range of styles and climates, so, true to its trend-starting freewheeling image, "anything goes." One thing that is constant among all these houses is that they each exude the best of California living.



LETTING THE OUTDOORS IN, ARXIS DESIGN STUDIO USES GLASS, STONE, AND SCULPTURE TO CREATE A SEAMLESS DESIGN FOR THIS HOME IN BEVERLY HILLS. (LEFT) UPON ENTERING THE HOUSE, ONE SEES CLEAR THROUGH TO THE BACKYARD, AND OUTDOOR AND INDOOR MERGE. (ABOVE) AN OUTDOOR SCULPTURE IS FULLY ENJOYED INDOORS AS WELL THROUGH LARGE WINDOWS IN THE LIVING ROOM. PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARIA ANTONIA VITERI

## BEVERLY HILLS WITH MIRO AND CHAGALL

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Many great architects create their first masterpieces for clients very dear to them—their parents. This was certainly the case for young designer Leonardo Umansky, who, with his partner at Arxis Design Studio, Ramiro Diazgranados, designed an elegant and open home for the elder Umanskys.

The parents wanted a home that would display their vast collection of art, take advantage of the beautiful weather in Beverly Hills and welcome three generations for weekly family dinners. To create a seamless appearance throughout the house, the designers used an abbreviated palette of materials and incorporated abstract art-like curves with the walls, staircase and ceilings both indoors and outdoors.

The exterior of the house possesses a California Modern look in the traditions of R.M. Schindler and Ray Kappe. A universal theme of openness and a connection to nature throughout the interior and exterior is expressed in the use of glass, Bouquet Canyon stone and redwood. In fact, floor-to-ceiling glass walls around the breakfast and family rooms slide into pockets, blurring the lines between interior and exterior, both of which sport limestone flooring to further emphasize this connection.

The plan of the house has a Modern aesthetic feeling, yet is given a more traditional material palette. Each of the rooms is separated by a change of materials on the floor or the creation of a threshold through lower ceiling heights and asymmetrical arches, rather than conventional doors. The formal living room and family room are divided by a bar that is flanked by two pivoting, eight-foot-wide Douglas fir doors. When the panels are closed, each room is clearly defined. When the panels are open, the bar serves as an island joining both rooms for large social gatherings.

The eclectic art collections stem from a lifetime of traveling and a love for the creative. The artwork includes pieces by Robert Graham, Roy Lichtenstein, Marc Chagall, Joan Miro and Agam, as well as Indonesian and Mexican paintings and Asian decorative arts. The house was to serve not as a museum, but as a domestic environment where art and architecture are simultaneously activated. Selected pieces are not merely placed, but treated as inhabitants of the space.

**SOURCES:** Furniture: Pace