

70

FASHION

76 THE BIG REVEAL

In the world of fine jewelry, more is more, and layering is king.

FEATURES

70 MODERNIST MARVELS

The multicultural modernist designs of Los Angeles' Ehrlich Yanai Rhee Chaney Architects are in demand among Silicon Valley homeowners.

84 LIFE ALFRESCO

Outdoor spaces, whether expansive or intimate, are made ultimately livable by two noted Bay Area landscape architecture firms.



ON THE COVER
Waverley House,
designed by Ehrlich Yanai
Rhee Chaney Architects
Photography by
Matthew Millman

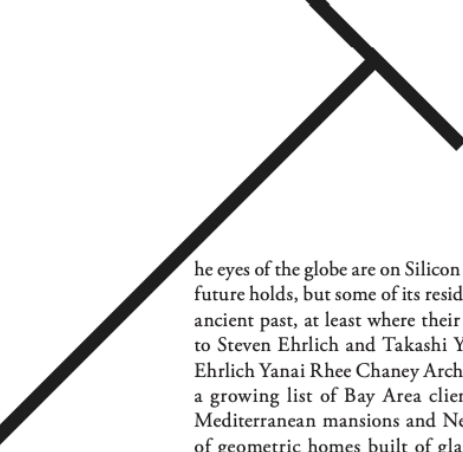
PHOTO BY MATTHEW MILLMAN

MODERNIST MARVELS

Ehrlich Yanai Rhee Chaney Architects fashions new-world homes with old-world principles.
BY CAROLYNE ZINKO

This multilevel home on Waverley Street in Palo Alto was created for a young couple. Opposite page: The largest double-glazed residential window in the U.S. (at the time of its installation) affords two stories of light to enter.





he eyes of the globe are on Silicon Valley, looking to see what the future holds, but some of its residents are looking to the world's ancient past, at least where their homes are concerned, thanks to Steven Ehrlich and Takashi Yanai. The two are partners at Ehrlich Yanai Rhee Chaney Architects, a Los Angeles firm with a growing list of Bay Area clients shunning Tudor replicas, Mediterranean mansions and New England saltboxes in favor of geometric homes built of glass, concrete, wood and steel. It's not the materials, but the ways these homes sit on the land and cocoon their owners that hearken back thousands of years.

The two, who've opened a San Francisco office in response to demand, employ an approach they describe alternately as new California modernism and multicultural modernism to blend the new with the old. "It's not so much a historical style," says Yanai, "but, at its root, a forward-thinking, optimistic architecture." Ehrlich says their style "acknowledges the history of earlier California modernists, from (Rudolph) Schindler to (Richard) Neutra to Ray Kappe, and also brings in other influences." The influences to which he refers are global influences: California's Spanish and Mexican roots, along with the Moroccan courtyards and earthen homes he saw and experienced in his travels to Africa after college in the 1970s, and the spare, but highly crafted, open-plan homes and their relationship to the landscape that Yanai observed and experienced while living in Japan in his 20s in the 1990s.

Like painters with a palette and brush, they approach each project as a work of art. Their aim: to reflect a client's tastes, incorporate touches by Bay Area master woodworkers and metalworkers, and orient the home to a site's topography and potential to maximize the light and views. "It's not just the physical; 'we can open a glass door and step outside,' but taking in the landscape as interior space, so if there's a view of Mount Tam, that's part of the composition," Yanai says, referring to the Japanese concept of borrowed landscape. "Maybe there's a patch of landscape that's only amazing at 5 PM every day. How can the architect frame that and bring that to your attention in your everyday life?" The pair also point to the title of their latest book, *Outside-In* (\$38, Monacelli Press), as the foundation of their philosophy. "It isn't just about bringing the exterior in," Ehrlich notes, "but outside influences in."

It's in Old Palo Alto, a neighborhood not far from the startups of downtown and the garage where the Hewlett-Packard Co. was born in 1939, that two of Ehrlich and Yanai's Bay Area works can be found. One is a young couple's home on Waverley Street. Its two stories are set among mature oaks to evoke a feeling of living among the trees. Heightening the experience are floor-to-ceiling glass windows, one of them a custom piece standing 33 feet tall, 10 feet wide and 4 inches thick. Three smaller windows had originally been penciled in

to cut costs, but the clients preferred one piece of glass. It's an apt metaphor for Silicon Valley, where dreamers make their own reality. At the time of installation, the window, made in Germany, was the largest sheet of double-glazed glass installed in a residential home in the United States (it was hoisted in place by a crane, and neighbors were invited to a viewing party to watch). The home's exterior is dark gray; ginkgo trees were planted in front to create a "deliberate conversation" between the landscape and the architecture, Yanai notes. "Not only do the colors of the trees when they're yellow resonate with the ochre in the handmade brick of the facade," he says, "but the front of the house looks totally different when the leaves are green or when they've fallen off, and that marks the passage of time and the seasons."

The other Palo Alto home a few blocks away is owned by tech entrepreneur Asher Waldfogel and his wife, Helyn MacLean. Some four years in the making, their two-story residence (with a basement) on a corner lot was the result of their desire to live in a home that had elements of futurism and California history. "A saltbox is not a California building," Waldfogel says. "A Mediterranean mansion is not a California building. There's this other California-international style tradition that really was centered around people's work in Los Angeles, like Neutra and Schindler. For us, that seemed like a California tradition we wanted to participate in."

The rap against such modern homes, in some quarters, is that they're too minimal, sterile or stark to be comfortable, but Waldfogel says the home affords a great sense of tranquility. To be sure, the rooms are expansive; the ceilings soar; and enormous floor-to-ceiling glass doors slide into pockets to let the outside in. Still, Waldfogel says, the designers "modulate scale so that you don't feel overwhelmed. We experience [it] as a home, not as a museum or a public kind of a space."

A guest who enters the front door, for instance, walks into a foyer with an overhang. This, he says, is "intentionally compressed, so that you're passing through something that's human scale and not a giant atrium. You walk into a space you connect to; it's a progression." The home's two separate living rooms are connected by a hallway that, on its other sides, leads to a kitchen and dining room. Both living rooms open out onto a backyard with grass, a reflecting pool and a covered patio. The bedrooms are upstairs; a billiard room is below ground, where a portion of the couple's fine art collection can be found. From the street, the home's mass is partially offset by its design as a mixture of rectangular shapes, rather than a monolithic block. Sitting on a corner lot, the home is also set back from the street and separated from the sidewalk by rows of flowers and shrubs. A courtyard with espaliered trees takes up most of the front yard, further softening the view. "You don't encounter

"It's not so much a historical style," says Yanai,
but at its root, a forward-thinking, optimistic architecture."



Clockwise from top: The dining room can be partitioned from the kitchen by sheers on a curved ceiling track; a workout room in an outbuilding beckons; a bathroom is flooded with light; a lower level is brightened by windows.

