

inspired and ranch-style homes, it should be noted that one of the first houses built in the area was a linear steel structure. It was the 1950s, and the original owner was a fan of the mid-century modern style that such legends as Richard Neutra were propagating. This, actually, is the home that was recently razed to make way for Bender's, and its presence on the scene was instrumental in his being given clearance to build in a community that historically favors architectural continuity.

Finding the right architect to assist him in creating a home that would reflect his exacting ideals was of the utmost importance to Bender. The principal of one of the more prominent design/build firms in Los Angeles, James Meyer of LeanArch says that when he spoke with Bender over the phone for the first time, "I had this strange sense that I'd known him for years." Meyer surmises that this is because both men have a "roll up your sleeves" attitude that has inspired them to live and breathe Bender's future home for the past two years. The design/build model is unique in that it effectively eliminates any disconnect between the vision of the architect and the building process, and Bender was attracted to this when he hired Meyer.

It cannot be overstated that Bender unrelentingly quests to realize exactly what he wants in life, which is why he and Meyer make a perfect team. Supremely thorough and committed to realizing his client's aims, Meyer is not one to let his own ego enter into the creative equation. Throughout this journey, he has struck a very delicate balance between scaling the heights of Bender's vision and shepherding his enthusiasm in order to align it with very real parameters. States Meyer, "Both of us are always thinking about the project, and our relationship is quintessentially that of the highly energetic client and the architect who channels that energy."

Like Bender, Meyer also believes in utilizing simple, honest materials. Once it is built, the end result will be a home that brings the indoor/outdoor living concept first explored in the case study houses of the 1950s to its pinnacle. The first draft featured a home that was literally half the size of what it will now be, and Meyer and Bender worked their way through approximately eight iterations of the plans before they arrived at the final one. Anyone who has ever embarked on such a process knows that the journey can feel arduously long at times, particularly when one must contend with zoning requirements and the very inescapable reality of having to consider the neighbors. For a take-no-prisoners personality like Bender, these challenges took him quite unawares.

Be that as it may, at no point did he consider compromising his

vision as an option. With Meyer at his side, Bender lobbied for the more than 7,500-square-foot home that will also be the first officially environmental house in the area. Ingeniously, the street view of the home will reveal only its shortest end, rendering it an unobtrusive, almost organic part of the surrounding ravine. One-third of the

house (the pool house/recreation room) is nestled into the hillside, in fact, and Bender and Meyer actually collaborated with the fire department when they planned the landscape. In addition to building with fire-resistant materials, the site is irrigated and the structures are fully equipped with sprinklers.

Comprised of three distinct buildings, it is surrounded by reflecting pools that will help keep the interior spaces cool in the summer. The two-story main residence contains a master suite, a private home office and a bath with full ocean and harbor views. These rooms hover over the glass-enclosed custom kitchen, dining, family and living rooms that all have views of a 20-foot by 80-foot pool and an intimate patio that serenely appears to float on the water. Large sliding glass doors can be opened for large gatherings or simply for enjoyment of Southern California's famous weather. Hearing Bender explain that he absolutely had to situate the master suite on the second floor because he can't sleep if he smells food summed up, for this writer, the

extent to which he premeditated virtually every aspect of daily life in this space.

The second structure, which is perpendicular to the first, is a guesthouse with access to the pool, while the pool house/recreation room that is nestled into the hillside is parallel to the main structure. All of the walkways on the property are covered in order to provide constant shade, while solar panels on the roofs ensure the home's heating needs will be met via responsible harnessing of natural energy. It is rare to find a home of this size that is at once so grand and yet almost quietly elemental, and perhaps this harmonious dichotomy could not have been achieved were it not for the energetic balance that exists between Bender and Meyer.

The fact remains, however, that construction is just beginning. For all of the thousands of hours that Bender, Meyer and his staff have already put into this project, thousands more remain. According to Meyer, "the creative process never really ends, but when you are both a designer and a builder, any challenges serve as opportunities for creative growth." The rest of this story remains to be written, like Bender's, and will continue being written as long as the home is filled, living and breathing as part of the landscape.



Top: a perspective of the facade from the entry point; bottom: large sliding glass doors instantly expose indoor living areas to outdoor spaces.

THE MOORE HOUSE MODERN ARCHITECTURE HANGING IN THE BALANCE

As the Peninsula awaits the arrival of a dramatic piece of contemporary architecture, another non-conformist residence may soon find its demise. Architect Lloyd Wright, son of Frank Lloyd Wright and visionary behind Wayfarers Chapel, designed the Moore House at 504 Paseo del Mar in Palos Verdes Estates. Completed in 1959, it is now under threat of demolition as its current owners plan to construct a new house on the site. The structure features strikingly angled roof overhangs, walls made from locally quarried Palos Verdes stone and vast windows that capitalize on its views of the ocean.

In late October 2010, the draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the demolition and new residential project (formally called the 504 Paseo del Mar Project) was released. According to EIR guidelines, the Moore House is eligible for listing as a historic resource but the report concluded that the house couldn't be



renovated to meet the owners' requirements for updated living spaces.

Controversially, the EIR did not evaluate reuse alternatives that would maintain the Moore House's eligibility for listing as a historic resource, in spite of numerous requests and the fact that evaluating preservation alternatives is required by law under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). According to the Los Angeles Conservancy's website, the city received nearly 300 letters on the project's previous Notice of Preparation (NOP) from the conservancy and other historic preservation organizations, area residents, design professionals, architectural historians and individuals across the country and abroad. Although the public comment period closed on December 10, 2010 and the final EIR will be released very soon, letters can still be submitted to the Palos Verdes Estates City Council. It is they who will ultimately decide the fate of this historic home.

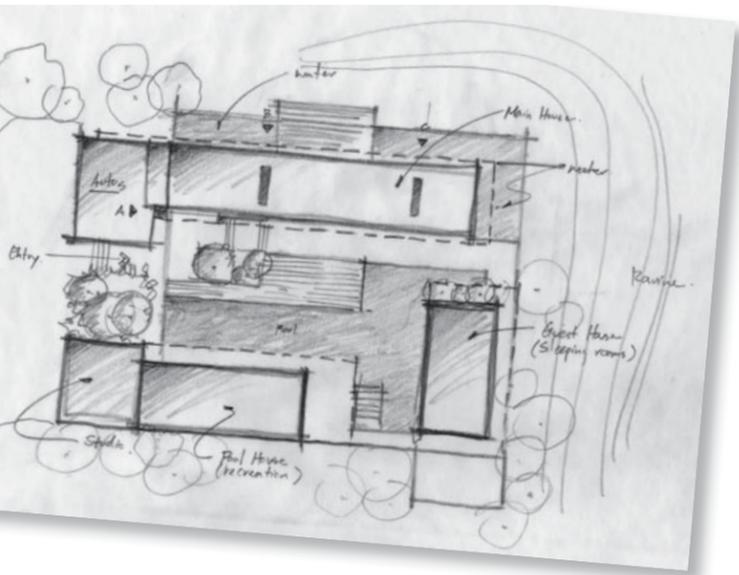
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Clockwise from left: Meyer's early sketches of the future "Fountainhead" estate; a rendering depicts the indoor/outdoor concept behind project; Meyer takes his client on a tour of the lot; the two-story structure will take full advantage of the property's expansive views; Ziv.



In Ayn Rand's 1943 work *The Fountainhead*, unlikely hero Howard Roark is an architect who repeatedly defies convention in order to maintain his creative integrity. While some find the idealism presented in this seminal piece of 20th-century literature extreme, Ziv Bender is decidedly amongst those for whom it speaks of their own uncompromising approach to life. Unlike the story's quiet, distant protagonist Roark, however, Bender is warm, engaging and full of unconcealed enthusiasm, and he's most recently begun pouring it into his latest project – Rancho Palos Verdes home that is arguably a contender for the history books.

Bender's own story is novel-worthy, so rife is it with the sort of peaks and valleys that have come to epitomize the realization of the American dream. To say he is an enigma would be an understatement, however, since when speaking with him the stories flow fast and loose while a clear sense of his trajectory is hard to come by. This much is clear: He grew up on a farm in Israel where he milked cows by hand. Like all Israeli youth, he served in the army for three years. Before he finished his service, he consulted with his commander, Yitzhak Mordechai, who later became the defense minister of Israel. He told Bender to travel, explore and find his own place in the world. Mordechai knew that the

nature of existence in Israel revolves largely around survival and wasn't suited for Bender, given his drive to live, build, create and learn.

In 1980, a year after his discharge from the army, Bender purchased a one-way ticket to Los Angeles "because that's where the movies were made and dreams come true." With a grand total of \$100 in his pocket, he started his career as a dishwasher in a Westwood restaurant. The fact that he couldn't speak, read or write in English at the time made Bender's process of settling in that much more surreal. His first residence in America was a 12-foot by 7-foot, one-car garage furnished only by a mattress that lay on the concrete floor and a lamp.

One Saturday night, while gazing up at the lit windows of Century City office buildings, he found himself in awe of the idea that the people on each floor were working through the night. This moment made a lasting impression on him, and he promised himself "if they can do it, so can I." Only later on, to his dismay, did he learn that those workers were the cleaning crews.

Another defining moment for Bender involved a manager in a luxury car showroom yelling at him for touching one of the vehicles. Sizing up his apparent lack of wealth, the manager told him to leave the premises at once since he couldn't possibly afford to pay for a car anyway. The event, which occurred shortly after he arrived in Los Angeles, left Bender vowing to one day be able to buy whatever he wanted. Over time, Bender's open, uninhibited approach to interacting with others found him moving in those very social circles that defined the decade of excess, and by the late 1980s he had purchased the international rights to a mega superstar's likeness in order to launch a line of products marked with the icon's image.

In speaking with Bender, one is left wondering whether it's an innate sense of privacy that inspires him to fly over the details of what must be a very interesting career path or, simply, a lack of interest in them. After meeting him, one might be inclined to say it's a little of both, with an emphasis on the latter, since Bender heavily invests his energies in the here-and-now with an eye on the future. For the record, well-known scandals resulted in the bottom dropping out of the endeavor, leaving Bender to return to America (once again) with nothing. Such is life.

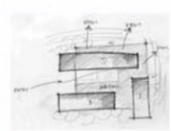
Fast forward to the present, and the matter of an as-yet-to-be-built home in Rancho Palos Verdes. While this bucolic enclave that hovers over the Pacific is well known for its picturesque array of Mediterranean-



Architect James Meyer his client Ziv Bender enjoy an early morning view days before laying the foundation on this impressive Rancho Palos Verdes property.



ZIV BENDER BUILDS A HOUSE



For the successful entrepreneur and South Bay resident, taking a no-compromises approach to manifesting his dream home is as natural as breathing.
WRITTEN BY MARLENE STANG • PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARLENE STANG

