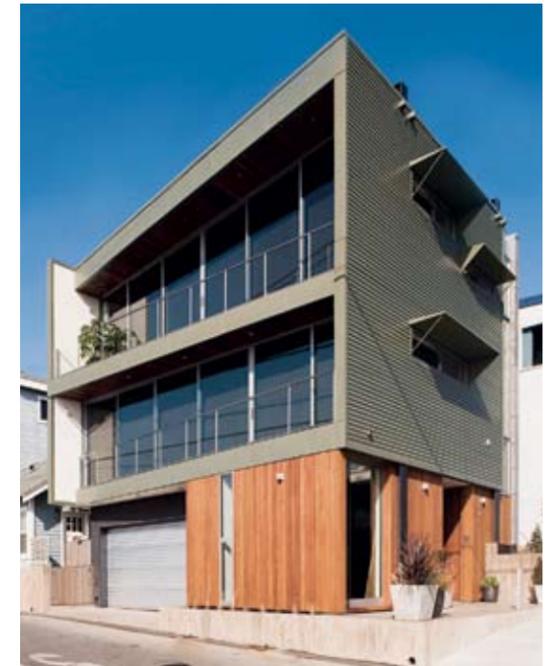


By Liz Seymour
Photographs by Claudio Santini

WHY I LOVE THIS

HOUSE

Talk about my idea of perfect:
This California beach house is
eco-friendly *and* modern



Land-starved Manhattan Beach, California, was the perfect place for architect James Meyer to prove a point he's been making ever since he founded Los Angeles-based LeanArch in 2001: "You don't need a lot of square footage to get a beautiful, spacious home." His challenge: Build a modern, yet comfortable three-bedroom house; use eco-friendly materials and alternative-energy technology; create a sense of luxury with high-end finishes and sophisticated design; and include a view of the nearby Pacific Ocean. And, oh yes, make it all happen on a 30x45-foot lot.

LEFT: This house is as design-conscious as it is earth-friendly. Practically all of the materials used are recycled or recyclable. **ABOVE:** It sits on a narrow lot, but nothing about the place feels cramped. The siding is made of 85-percent recycled aluminum. "It reminds me of the clapboard on old beach houses," says architect James Meyer.





ABOVE: Floors and ceilings are done in a sustainably grown tropical hardwood called cumuru; the floor is finished with durable water-based urethane, and the ceiling and trim are finished with Brazilian rosewood oil. Like something out of *The Jetsons*, the hanging fireplace swivels 360 degrees, while the oval marble insert underneath catches stray sparks. Very cool!

RIGHT: A sleek energy-efficient fixture over the dining table is lit with a fluorescent tube.



At less than 1,800 square feet, the three-story house is closer in size to the beach cottages that used to line the Southern California coast than the 9,000-square-foot behemoths that have replaced them. But, says Meyer, "it's not about size, it's about smart design."

That's smart as in street smarts: "Before we start designing, we study the site for exposure to the sun, prevailing winds, where the views are," he says. "When you're in a flood plain you build on stilts; when you're in a rainy environment you create a steep roof pitch; when you're in the desert you build thick walls." And when you're at the California beach, you open up the west wall to take in a 180-degree view of surf, sky and sand.

But there's more to the expansive west wall than a gorgeous view. The windows are part of a passive solar system that brings heat in and vents it back out with virtually no moving parts. "Passive design"—design that takes advantage of solar energy without the



ABOVE: Natural light from skylights and windows illuminate the third-floor living area. The house uses only fluorescent and low-voltage lighting—it's a cheap way to cut energy costs.

"Lots of windows make the small space feel bigger than it is. I love the way light washes down the wall from skylights above."—Ty

use of pumps or fans—“is by far the least expensive way to build sustainability into a home,” says Meyer.

Every inch of the compact floor plan counts. Bathrooms, clad in mahogany and frosted glass, are cantilevered out over the stairwell. Perched on the third floor to maximize the view, living, dining and cooking are combined in one airy sweep of space that opens onto a 35-foot-long deck. In the second-floor bedrooms, bath and showers are right out in the open. “If you have everything separate, it really chops off the space,” says Meyer. “This way, you get to make the most of the square footage *and* share the natural light.”

The house sparkles with touches of luxury. Floors and ceilings are of a dense South American hardwood called cumuru; the bathtub and showers sit on raised platforms faced in imported Italian *lagos azul* limestone; kitchen cabinets are covered in

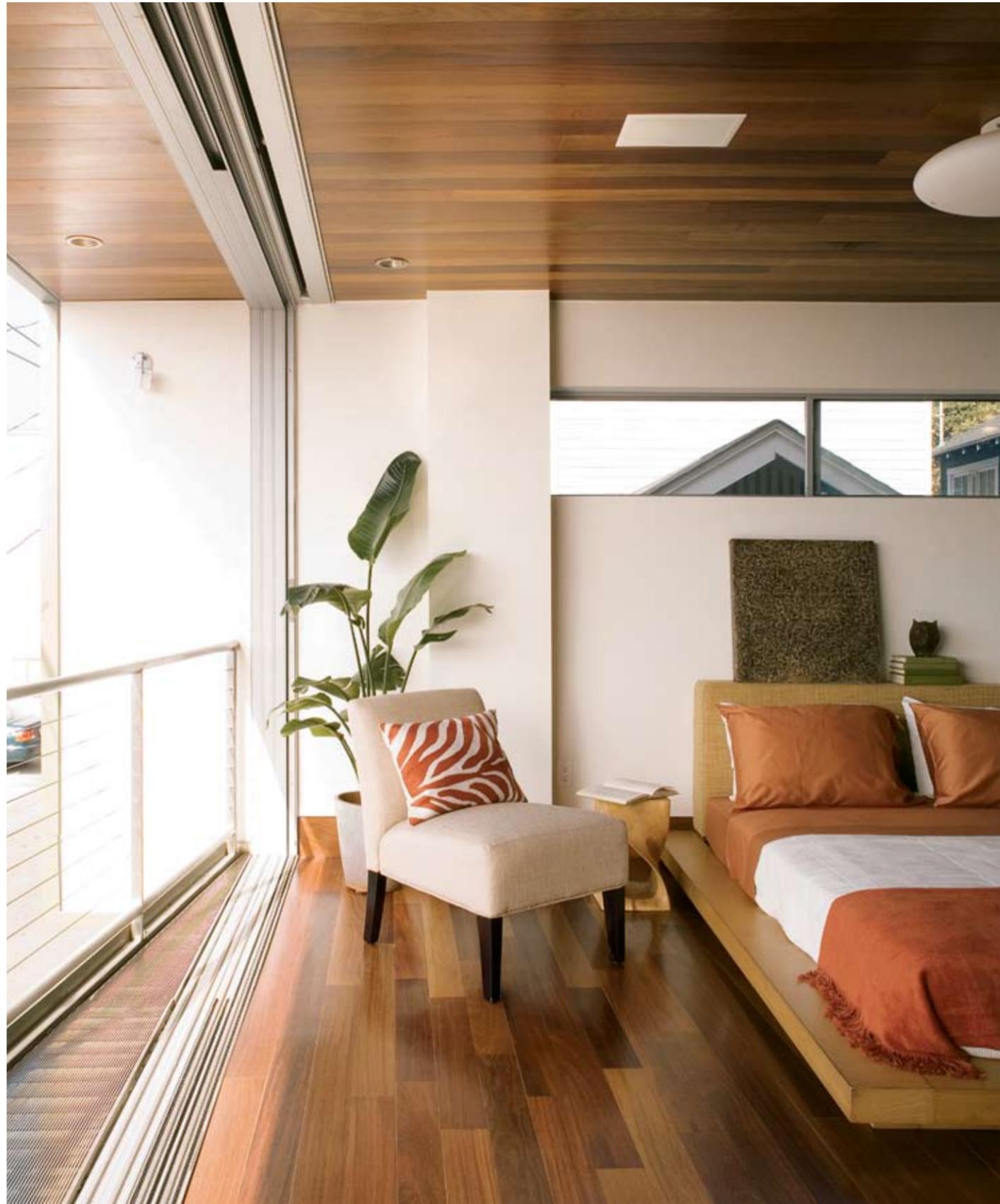


“Little things, like tinting the grout to match the bathroom limestone, make a big difference. It’s an easy way to get a more finished look.”—Ty



BELOW LEFT: The master bath was designed to pamper, with features like a limestone floor with radiant heat.

BELOW: Bedrooms and baths are combined in one compact sweep of space, a practical way to save square footage and make the most of natural light.



“Earth-friendly doesn’t have to mean granola any more than modern has to be hard-edged. I like the way the two coexist in this house.” —Ty

OPPOSITE: Both bedrooms open onto a dramatic 35-foot-long deck. When the doors and windows are open, it’s like an extension of the rooms.
LEFT: The limestone-faced platform visually separates the bathroom part of the master suite from the bedroom. It also hides the plumbing.
BELOW LEFT: The master bedroom includes both shower and tub. “The trick was to get as much as we could in a small footprint without sacrificing style,” says Meyer.

rift-sawn white oak veneer, and counter and bar tops are in Italian marble and mahogany. “Mixing and matching tones and grains gives the space a warm, eclectic, welcoming look,” says Meyer. “Modern does not have to mean cold.”

Nor does it have to mean cold-hearted. All woods are certified by the Forest Stewardship Council and finished in water-based urethane and Brazilian rosewood oil. Paints used in the house are nontoxic and environmentally responsible. Most of the other materials—from the aluminum siding on the exterior to the insulation in the walls—are recycled, recyclable or both. And on the roof, the house wears the badge of eco-friendliness: a bank of solar panels equipped with the capacity to dramatically reduce the electric bill.

“There is a real value to intelligent design,” says Meyer. “At the end of the day, there’s no sacrifice in sustainability if you make smart decisions at the front end.” ■