



THE ARCHITECT

Carlos Zubieta*Bernstein-Zubieta Architects***Tatiana Barhar** *Verdego Design*

THE HOUSE Barhar, a retail architect in the surf industry, worked with Zubieta to create a modern beach house that opens to the garden via a 15-foot sliding door. Inside features include an open sleeping loft and 22-foot ceilings in the dining room.

THE 'HOOD PERK "We don't drive at all. We commute on bicycles or just walk!" says Barhar.

Power Grid

L.A.'s hottest architects turn a quiet quadrant of Venice streets into the insider's residential 'hood for top design talent

[*By Sam Lubell* | *Photography by Melissa Valladares*]

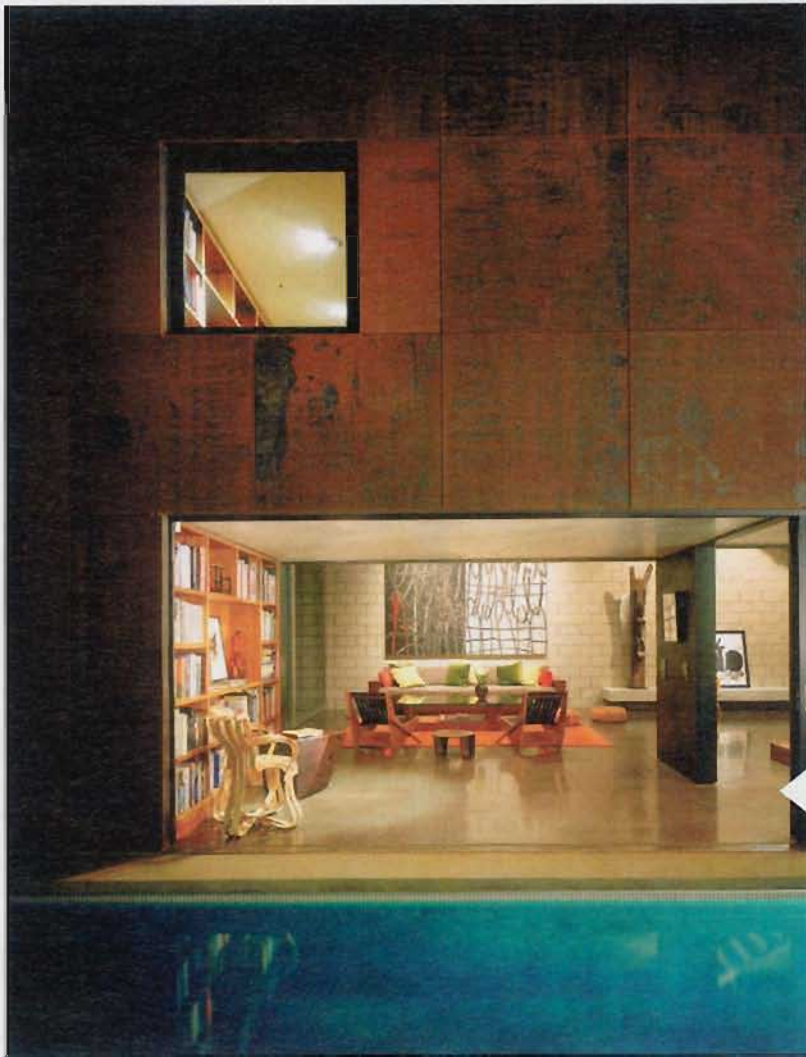
Sure, almost every noteworthy L.A. architect has designed and built a home in Venice Beach, from actress-friendly canal getaways to boardwalk mini-manses. But where do those top architects actually live? Just head inland a few blocks to a nondescript, non-touristed pocket of tree-lined streets east of Abbot Kinney and north of Venice Boulevard: Welcome to ground zero for the city's highest concentration of A-list architects. On Milwood Avenue alone, two husband-and-wife design teams have recently built their own edgy, out-of-the-box homes that keep easy company with the block's original, low-slung bungalows. Over on Nowitz, another architect couple lives in a striking, open-plan house. Two blocks west on Palms Boulevard, Steven Ehrlich, the influential architect known for his rule-breaking residential and commercial structures, lives with his wife, writer Nancy Griffin. Just a stone's throw away from there, Frank Clementi and his wife, Julie Smith-Clementi, of Rios Clementi Hale Studios (Downtown's new Civic Park, Woodbury University Studio Building, not Neutral), live in a cube-like, modern bungalow on one of the area's covered walk streets. And Michael Sant, whose striking mixed-use buildings dot Abbot Kinney, is yet another of the area's residents, committed to the "low-key, low-car, garden environment." Here's a snapshot of home-sweet-home for L.A. architects:



THE ARCHITECTS

Yasi Vafai &**Robert Thibodeau** *DU Architects*

THE HOUSE The husband-and-wife design team followed the footprint of the site's original house, purposefully "under-building in an era of mansionization," says Thibodeau. The two-story house follows a simple design plan: "All horizontal CONTINUED..."



... CONTINUED planes [ceilings and floors] were to be expressed as wooden elements. All vertical planes [walls] were to be expressed as white elements," says Thibodeau. THE 'HOOD PERK "The walk streets are so intimate," says Vafai. "Walkers stop and look at our house; their children go on our swing, which is hanging from the sycamore tree. Then we'll walk to the corner and jump on our neighbor's giant trampoline, then walk another half block and go on the tire swing hanging from a 150-year-old magnolia tree."

THE ARCHITECT
Steven Ehrlich
Steven Ehrlich Architects

THE HOUSE Completed in 2005, Ehrlich designed his much-publicized house to be able to transform from "a totally open pavilion into a very

cozy house" via huge doors that completely disappear. THE 'HOOD PERK "We're part of the community, but far enough from the intensity of the boardwalk and Abbot Kinney. The area is quiet and unbelievably green. People have really beautiful gardens here."

THE ARCHITECTS
Jason Ruperto and Emmylou Vy
Emjae Design Shop

THE HOUSE Ruperto calls the A-frame structure clad in standing seam metal and cedar siding a new version of the classic beach bungalow: "It opens up on three sides so we can spend as much time as possible outdoors."

THE 'HOOD PERK "There's a freedom to design whatever you want here; the zoning laws are more relaxed," says Ruperto. "And then there's the fact that we're living and working in this community of architects, which I like. Robert, Carlos and I all went to SCI-Arc and we all know each other." ▣



STEVEN EHRlich HOUSE PHOTO BY TERHARD REIFFER

Block Stars!

More design talent in Venice's under-the-radar area

Lawrence Scarpa and Angela Brooks

Pugh + Scarpa Architecture Husband-and-wife partners of this highly experimental design firm built their ultra-sustainable Solar Umbrella home in Venice.

Dennis Gibbens *Dennis Gibbens Architects* Gibbens lives above the mod Japanese shop Tortoise on Abbot Kinney, in a striking live-work structure of his own design.

David Hertz *Studio of Environmental Architecture*

Hertz's high-concept, eco designs include the Floating House in Venice and the almost-completed 747 Wing House in Malibu.

Olivier Touraine and Deborah Richmond

Touraine-Richmond Architects The husband-and-wife team are known for Venice's One Window House, a stylish study in low-impact, anti-McMansion dwellings.

Anthony Coscia *Coscia Day Architecture + Design*

Coscia studied waves when designing his stunning Venice pad, where black and white, curved and angled elements meet.