

Venice CA

Art + Architecture in a
Maverick Community

Text by Michael Webb

Photographs by Juergen Nogai



3 Panel Game

Surfers riding the waves to the north of the Venice fishing pier have the best view of the house that Thomas Ennis commissioned for his family, and thus it's familiar territory for the architect David Hertz. Two steel-framed stories rise from a concrete base containing an expansive garage, storage, and services. Aluminum-faced refrigeration panels are clipped to the frame to form a curtain wall that alternates with sheets of translucent and clear glass. These are notched and angled on the long south wall to pull in natural light and frame ocean views, and the floor-to-ceiling glass wall of the mid-level living room cranks down to form a waist-high parapet. The geometry of steel and concrete, aluminum and glass, and the cantilevered balconies recall the asymmetrical compositions of R. M. Schindler, the Austrian-turned-Angeleno, who drew inspiration from the De Stijl school of Dutch modernists.

The owner makes equipment for car washes, and the house is full of water features, from the fountain splashing over mosaic at the front to an automated shower for people coming off the beach to a swim-in-place pool on the roof deck. The architect has used renewable walnut for stair treads and the angled kitchen cabinets, playing this off concrete floors, exposed steel joists, and decking. A pneumatic glass elevator rises from garage to roof. It's a tough, practical, energy-efficient house that draws its power from photovoltaic panels on the flat roof, and is naturally ventilated. The insulation panels would keep ice frozen in the desert, and they have a forty-year guarantee against the corrosive salt air. The house that formerly occupied the site had none of these assets, but it was briefly home to Jim Morrison, and Hertz was careful to save all the doors.





