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Sustainability in Stages

"Personally, I'd rather be living outside," says architect David Hertz. As a young man surfing in Bali, he was impressed by tropical village compounds where indoors and out flow into each other. "Those houses seemed able to breathe, like plants and flowers."

Hertz has transported this idea of an ecological village to Venice, California, where he lives near the beach with his wife, Stacy Fong, and their three children. The compound—four dwellings connected by bridges and clustered around a courtyard lap pool—is an exuberant presence on a confined city lot.

Like many family homes, it evolved in stages, beginning with a lucky encounter. In 1994, walking in their Venice neighborhood, Hertz and Fong spied a rare sight: ▶

In the new addition to the Hertz/Fong residence, the architect's son Max tinkers with his extensive array of Legos and War Hammer miniatures in the upstairs office/playroom.

My House

Trellis-like balcony railings (below) cur the exposed timber frame extending over the house. The balcony and fence are made from sustainably harvested ipe wood. Sophie and Colin (right) enjoy their new pool, the only part of the home not solar-powered.



a vacant 40 by 90-foot lot. Up until that point, they'd only been thinking of adding a second story to accommodate their three rambunctious youngsters. They made a low offer to secure the lot, but serious strings were attached: They had to design and permit their as-yet-undreamed-of dream house in just 90 days or forfeit the deal.

Fortunately, the pair was up to the challenge. Hertz is a graduate of SCI-Arc, and worked with adventurous architects John Lautner and Frank Gehry before starting his own Santa Monica-based practice in 1984. He began pioneering a then-radical specialty: ecologically sensitive design. Hertz parlayed this early interest into offbeat but practical projects. He's currently completing a tilt-up house of prefab industrial refrigeration panels in Venice. And for the old Tony Duquette estate in Malibu, he's salvaging a mothballed Boeing 747, which he will dissect and reassemble into a solar-powered residence with a meditation pavilion in the cockpit.

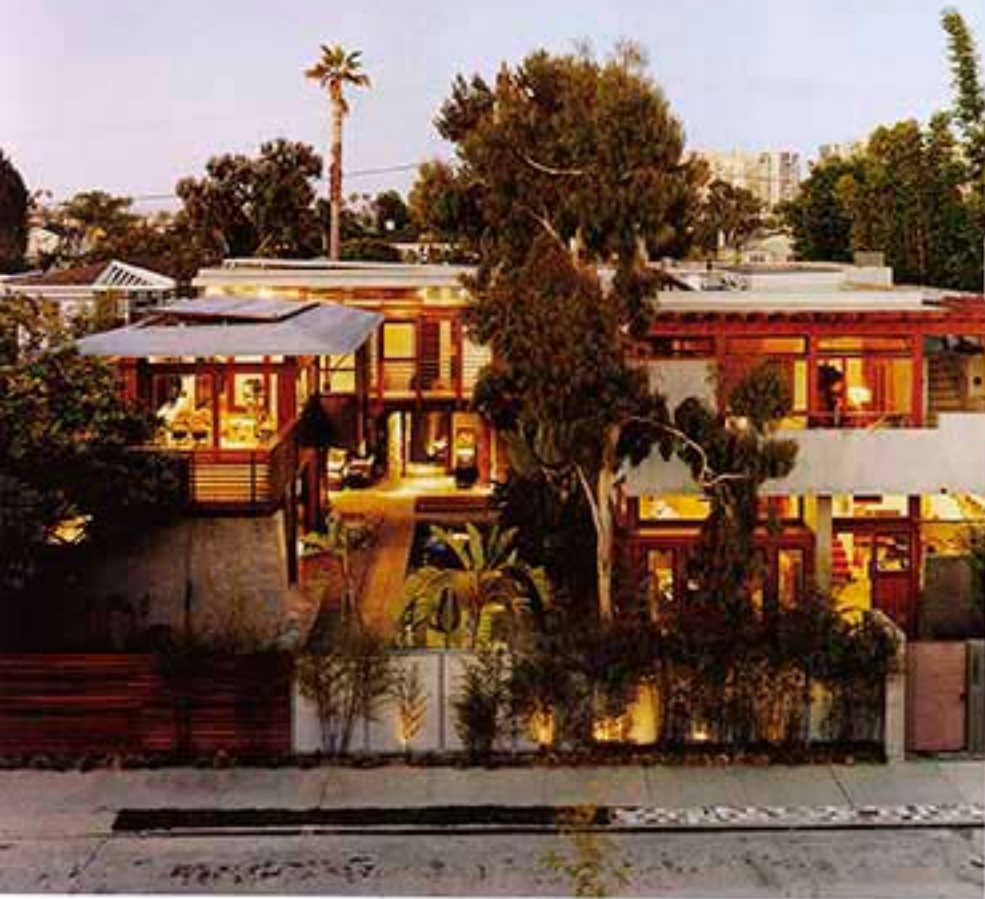
Hertz is also an entrepreneur, whose product Syndecrete, his recipe of cement plus recycled glass chips, computer parts, and vinyl records (among other things), transforms trash into stylish interior elements. Around the time he and Fong bought the vacant lot, he had already been precasting tiles, countertops, sinks, furniture, even vases out of Syndecrete. (Fong, a nonpracticing architect, handles the business affairs for Syndecrete and Hertz's architectural practice.)

"I saw the house as a working laboratory to test my ideas and as a showcase for Syndecrete," Hertz says. Pressed for time, he dashed off a design that stacked space in two buildings joined by a glass bridge above a courtyard. He had no inkling that he had initiated an expansive family compound that would be ten years in the making.

In 1996, the family of five moved into their new house, a light-filled, 2,700-square-foot modernist zerie that unfolds in seven open levels across two buildings and ▶

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a black bikini top and a pink and white bikini bottom, is standing in an outdoor shower. She is holding a handheld showerhead and spraying water. The shower stall has walls made of dark brown and light tan stone tiles. There are four showerheads mounted on the wall. To the right, there is a white pedestal sink with a chrome faucet. The floor is covered in dark grey pebbles with two large, light-colored stone stepping stones. The background shows a concrete wall and some green plants.

Sophie, 11, rinses off in the outdoor shower made from 12-by-12-inch Syndcrete tiles cut into 3-by-3-inch squares, which Hertz intentionally set so that they appear to undulate. The sink is from Boffi; the shower fixtures are Arne Jacobsen for Vola. [p. 219](#)



The exuberant results of Hertz's design are visible from the street (left). Giant birds of paradise, king palms, and bamboo tower above the fence. The Balinese long building, seen on the far left, is almost nautical; on the right, the original house's tamped-earth entry wall frames its concrete layers. The courtyard (below) is now the heart of the house.



a connecting bridge. The kids got bedrooms in the rear building, with parents up front. A solar panel, solar radiant heating, sustainable hardwoods, and nontoxic materials also evidenced the couple's growing interest in intertwining sustainability with cutting-edge design.

By 2002, the family had outgrown the nest and decided to build onto the adjacent 40-by-90-foot property they'd bought as an investment in 1998. "This time," Fong says, "we wanted more space, especially outdoors, a pool for the kids, and the ability to entertain leisurely."

While vacationing in Bali, the couple envisioned a resortlike family compound. Hertz designed two new glass-walled buildings connected by bridges opening onto a central courtyard and lap pool—now the heart of the house—plus a home theater, exercise room, outdoor kitchen, and beach shower. Colin, 13, and Sophie, 11, got new bedrooms while eight-year-old Max stayed put in the boys' original space.

"If I'd plopped a house in the middle of the lot, I'd have had four small bifurcated yards," Hertz explains. "With four buildings at the corners I could explore multiple interior spaces."

As a practical consideration, the wide-open resort atmosphere is sustained by hefty solar power. Hertz and Fong realized, as many homeowners do, that a new addition was a great way to gain solar capacity. The original house had just one solar panel (its rooftops were designed more for outdoor living). In the addition, the new rooftops support a 15-kilowatt power plant that provides electricity and heat for the entire complex (except for the pool). The monthly savings are sizable.

Though they're far from the Far East, Hertz and Fong are luxuriating in their tropically inspired eco-resort. And a new generation of surfers is enjoying a harmonious environment, where their boogie boards seem right at home. ▶



How to Make My House Your House

Sustainable Wood Trellises

Inspired by Balinese villages, architect David Hertz shaded large glass expanses with vertical trellises of sustainably harvested ipe wood (above, top).

Syndecrete

Castoffs get architectural pizzazz with Syndecrete, Hertz's creative mix of concrete and recycled glass chips, old computer parts, postconsumer carpet fiber, scrap wood chips, vinyl records, etc. His house features Syndecrete countertops, sinks, dining table (above right), fireplaces, tiles, floors, and more. For customers, he'll make almost anything. Syndecrete comes in 11 standard

colors (and hundreds of custom colors) and with ground, polished, or textured surfaces. www.syndesisinc.com

Optical Windows and Skylights

Wired to a whole-house thermostat, a series of electric windows and skylights automatically open or close as the temperature rises or falls. "You don't even have to be home for it to work," says Hertz. www.optical-components.globalspec.com

Self-Sufficient Solar

A high-tech photovoltaic panel array and a parabolic evacuator tub collector generate all household electricity (above left). The

15-kilowatt, net-metered system lights the lights, heats the house, and provides hot water for the whole house. Running it is virtually cost-free. "Guess what? You can't afford not to have solar," says Stacy Fong.

Natural Rhythms

Hertz sited the house to catch ocean breezes and change with the light. He merges indoors and out with large windows, sliding glass doors, and skylights. The expansive central courtyard (seen above right), rooftop terraces, and sleeping porch are all outdoor rooms. "Even if you need air-conditioning, roof overhangs, shading, and landscaping will help," Hertz says. ■