



EXCLUSIVE + CALIFORNIAN HOMES

An Architect's Light-Filled Home Is Tailored to the Scale of a SoCal Neighborhood

By Mandi Keighran – June 24, 2020

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A California architect designs a home for his growing family that seamlessly fits into the neighborhood—and boasts an outdoor living room.

From the 1930s to the 1950s, Los Angeles developers rapidly built large suburban tracts of modest, two-bedroom homes that reflected the lifestyle and market of the time. Fast forward to today, and many of the new homes being built in these aging neighborhoods are large, four-plus-bedroom constructions that are at odds with their surroundings.



The original home on the site was developed in 1936 as a 1,250-square-foot residence with two bedrooms and one and a half bathrooms. Architect Joseph Danganan wanted to respect this modest scale when he designed a new home for his family.

"The goal was to design a home that did not impose on the neighborhood in scale, materiality, or form," he says. "The first floor maintains a setback consistent with the neighborhood, and its second level is pushed away from the street much further than is required by code."



Architect Joseph Danganan and his wife with their five-month-old son. The couple designed the home together to meet the needs of their growing family and to showcase the work of growing architecture practice, Woods + Danganan.

The home's exterior form draws inspiration from the simplicity and confidence of the Tetsuka House by British architect John Pawson. "The nuances of texture and color differences between the lower and upper level are quite lovely," says Joseph. "It served as inspiration for the simplicity and minimalism of the building form when designing my own home."



"Public interior and exterior spaces have been arranged to enable free flow from one space to another," says Joseph. "One can feel the total length and width of the property by standing at the heart of the home, the kitchen island."

The home is organized around two main axes. A north-south axis runs down the center of the living area and includes the kitchen, dining area, and exterior courtyard. The other axis runs east-west and includes the breakfast nook, kitchen, family room, two-story exterior atrium space, and the covered area of the backyard.



The Heath Tile kitchen backsplash features the Alabaster colorway of the Mural series, which features six different glaze blends. The subtle variation complements the plasterwork and white oak timber used throughout the interior.



Pocketed sliding doors connect the breakfast nook to the front yard, which is screened from passersby with olive trees. "Enjoying the early morning light that enters the breakfast nook is a great way to wake up while having a cup of coffee," says Joseph.

A guest bedroom, office, and shared bathroom are tucked into the northwest portion of the home, offering a retreat from the public spaces. Two children's bedrooms and a shared bathroom are stacked directly above, while the master suite is located off the south side of the home.



The guest bedroom is tucked away on the ground floor, separating it from the family bedrooms on the first floor and offering privacy.



The upstairs kid's bath features Caesarstone quartzite surfaces, which match those in the kitchen. A decorative shower curtain, rather than a glass barrier, softens the space and adds texture.



The nursery on the second floor is situated directly above the guest bedroom on the ground floor. The two bathrooms are also stacked to allow for efficient structural, mechanical, and plumbing systems.

The master suite features large glazed walls that form the second level of the atrium and provide natural light and ventilation to the room. Similarly, a skylight above the tub in the master bathroom creates a light-filled refuge, while the master shower boasts an entirely glass ceiling—making it possible to shower by the light of the full moon.



When the blinds are open, the glazed walls in the master bedroom frame the sculptural pine tree in the atrium below. A white oak feature wall references the bespoke joinery throughout the home.



The countertop in the master bathroom is Taj Mahal quartzite. The master shower is separated from the rest of the bathroom with a decorative curtain, rather than a glass door, so the space feels like its own separate experience.



"My favorite space in the home might be the master shower," says Joseph. "The skylight covers the entire shower, and when there is a full moon you don't even need a light. I find it to be a very peaceful and calming space."

The exterior courtyard functions as the formal living room of the home, and most evenings the family opens all the doors to form one large "great room" space. "The opening to the sky acts as an oversized skylight, and the center fire pit replaces the traditional fireplace and hearth," says Joseph. "The space is defined by the continuation of the fascia, and it frames the sky and the podocarpus hedges in the yard to the north."



Four-panel sliding doors fully pocket, eliminating any boundaries between the interior and the courtyard. A central fire feature anchors the seating area, referencing the traditional fireplace found in living rooms.

One of the key drivers in the design was to create flexible interior and exterior spaces for entertaining. "The home has the ability to easily open up or close down based on our mood or the activities taking place—we have hosted personal events with close to 100 people, and intimate gatherings of just a few couples," says Joseph. "The connection to each garden space can be experienced as a singular event, or all can be opened to allow connections. It feels like we are in our own private oasis, even though we're in the middle of the city."



The family room couch is tucked into a nook to create a cozy retreat that still has views past the atrium to the backyard and kitchen.

The couple's now-17-month-old son also loves the connection between the interior and exterior spaces, and visibility throughout the property was another goal so that the couple could keep an eye on him whether he's in the backyard, front yard, or courtyard.

"Our son also loves to look through all of the skylights in the home," says Joseph. "They are great for bringing in natural light, but they also grant him a visual connection to the outside. He's constantly looking up at the clouds, rain, sun, moon, and airplanes in a way that we never would have imagined."



Strategic openings and skylights—such as the one above the dining room table—provide plenty of natural light throughout the day. As a result, artificial lighting is only needed at night.

The exterior form is completely rendered in dark olive-colored plaster, and the ground level is planted with creeping fig vines that will eventually envelop the first-floor walls and ground the home to the landscaped site.



The color of the plaster and the use of landscaped elements help to soften the rectilinear form and minimize the impact of the building on the neighborhood. Creeping fig vines help ground the home to the site, and as they grow they will camouflage the mass of the built form.

The interior is defined by custom white oak millwork in each room, which the couple describe as "integral to our daily life." The warmth of the timber complements the earth-toned exterior plasterwork, while the natural grain and color offers a degree of contrast that adds texture and subtle complexity to the material palette. "It was the most costly finish material in the entire project," reveals Joseph. "It was worth it, though."



Custom millwork units are strategically located in every space—including hallways—to provide ample storage for the growing family.



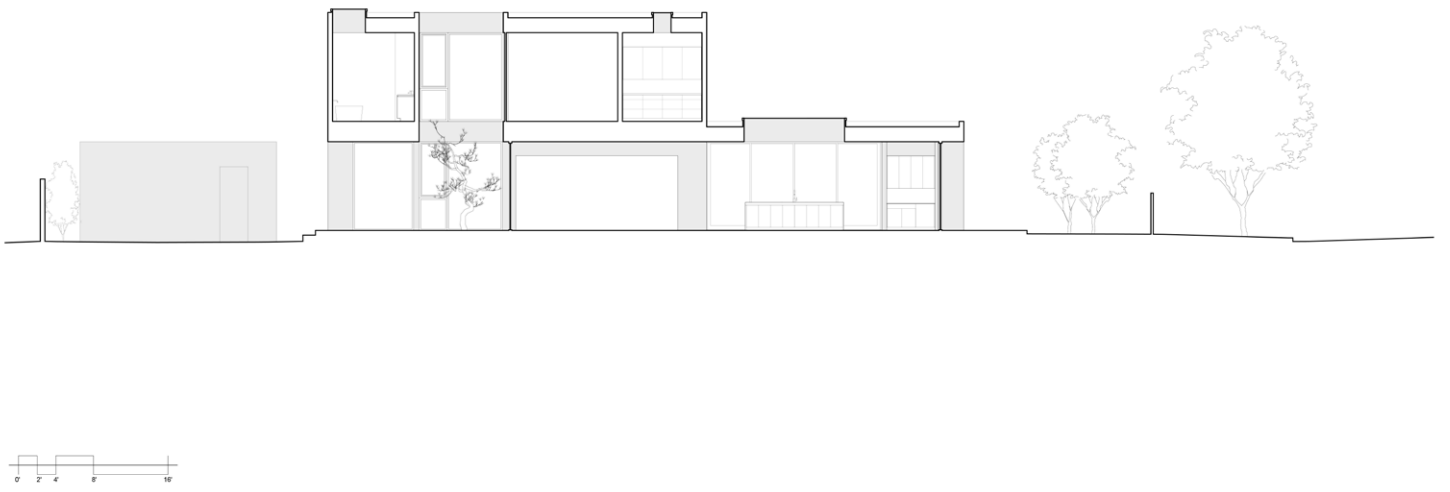
The office features bespoke timber shelves, desks, and cabinets crafted from white oak. "My wife and I designed each piece of millwork, and we reviewed each interior elevation for function," says Joseph. "Our senior project architect prepared the fabrication shop drawings, and we hired the fabricator directly, which allowed us to bypass the costly middle man and gave us complete quality control. We then hired a local carpenter to install and then finish the millwork on-site."

The budget was reduced by constructing the home entirely from wood, with no structural steel—a move that also meant the build was fairly quick. Additionally, the exterior is finished in acrylic plaster, an economical material that has been elevated through its detailed and deliberate application. The edges are defined by metal profiles that enhance the simple forms.

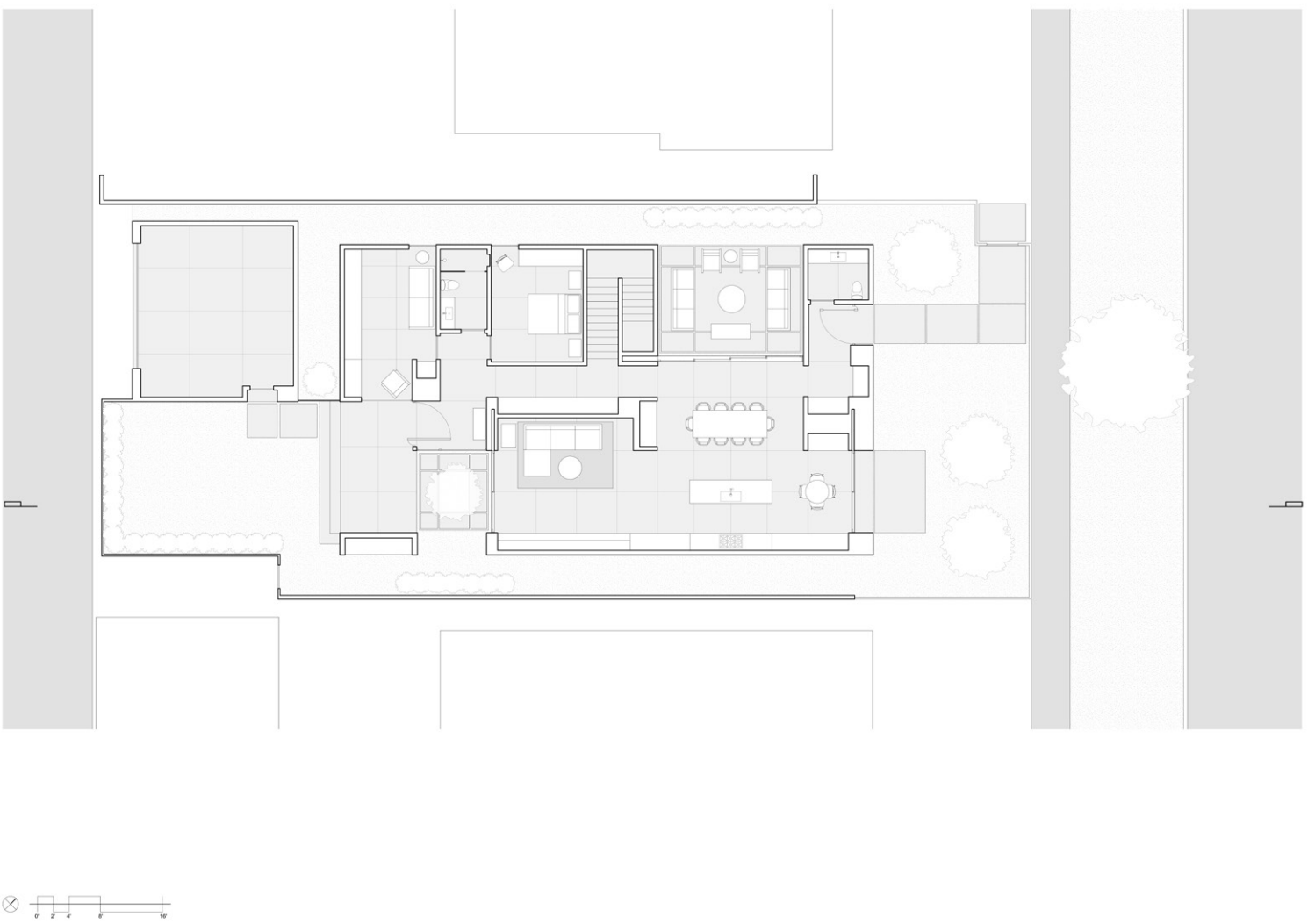


Although the two-story atrium is smaller than the courtyard, it is no less important to the design. The glazed pocket doors are opened daily, connecting the family room to the rear yard, and framing the sculptural form of the 30-year-old Japanese black pine garden bonsai.

"The design of the home is a very simple exterior and interior floor plan that looks boring on paper, but is quite dynamic in experience," says Joseph. "The beauty is in the restraint and simplicity."



Section of Culver City Case Study House by Woods + Dangaran



Level-one floor plan of Culver City Case Study House by Woods + Dangaran



Level-two floor plan of Culver City Case Study House by Woods + Dangaran

Project Credits:

Architect of Record: Woods + Dangaran / @woods dangaran

Structural Engineer: John Labib & Associates

Landscape Design Company: Chris Sosa Landscape Architect

Lighting Design: Helius Lighting Group

Interior Design: Woods + Dangaran

Sound Engineer: Legato Home Music + Theater

Cabinetry Design: Woods + Dangaran

Photography: Francis Dreis

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