

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

THE INTERNATIONAL DESIGN AUTHORITY

OCTOBER 2015

Smart Moves

**NATE BERKUS +
JEREMIAH BRENT'S
DOMESTIC BLISS**

**HOW AD'S 2015
INNOVATORS
ARE CHANGING
THE WORLD**

**THE U.S. EMBASSY
IN SPAIN
GETS A CHIC
NEW LOOK**

**PLUS
SAN FRANCISCO'S
DESIGN BOOM**



The dramatic entrance hall of a Los Angeles house that decorator Dan Fink and architecture firm Tim Murphy Design Assoc. created for a Silicon Valley entrepreneur opens onto the library, which in turn leads to the dining room. **Opposite:** Paved in richly veined marble, the entry is furnished with a 19th-century Continental center table from Neil Smith Antiques and Poul Kjerholm armchairs from Suite NY. For details see Sources.





Any new business endeavor needs a hook. After all, so often the key to success is identifying a niche, some corner of the market that has not yet been adequately served. Intentionally or not, this is precisely what interior decorator Dan Fink has done with his design studio. Though based in New York City, Fink secures a majority of his projects on the West Coast, counting among his clients some of Silicon Valley's most powerful figures—men and women he describes as having “suddenly found themselves with the means to buy that first dream home but who aren't quite comfortable with the design establishment.”

Grasping this dynamic was something Fink was uniquely qualified to do. His first job out of Stanford University was working as the assistant to a tech mogul. “These are people who run their businesses on efficiencies,” says the designer, who launched his firm in 2010. “I think I've been able to accommodate this need for speed and convenience and to explain things in a way they can relate to.” What's more, the tech industry is used to allowing employees to operate without a lot of supervision or interference, which is any designer's dream. “Their style is less about micromanaging and more about delegating,” Fink says.

That was certainly the case with one such entrepreneur seeking a Los Angeles home where he could enjoy the sunshine, entertain friends, and create a contemporary salon experience. “He has intellectual interests that are very wide-reaching,” Fink says of the client. “So he was seeking a venue to engage with people of all kinds on various subjects.” To that end Fink was asked to find the right property, oversee any construction or renovations, and furnish the interiors.

Given the area's array of first-rate architecture and that the homeowner has what Fink characterizes as “a mind geared toward the future,” the designer's plan had been to zero in on a classic modernist house, but nothing appropriate presented itself. What did, though, was an imperfect contemporary structure on an exciting site: a promontory that juts out like a diving board, with unobstructed views of downtown L.A. and Santa Monica in the distance. “It was the ideal spot to create something quite dramatic,” says the designer.

To make Fink's vision a reality, the house was largely demolished, and San Francisco architect Tim Murphy was called into service. “We looked to a lot of Rudolph Schindler's work for inspiration, as well as to old Hollywood,” Murphy says, including longtime MGM art director Cedric Gibbons's 1930 villa in the Santa Monica Mountains. The result of Fink and Murphy's partnership is both of-the-moment and timeless: a striking V-shaped building with towering steel casement windows set into white stucco walls. “We wanted it to have some grandeur,” Fink says.

That impression is reinforced indoors, where ceiling heights in several of the public spaces soar to almost 30 feet and energizing expanses of dramatically grained marble, sugary limestone, and rich walnut abound. “The volumes of the great room and the library are huge,” Murphy says. “They're very beautiful, monumental spaces.” Equally bold is the great room's spiral staircase, a sculptural gesture Fink dubbed “the double helix,” which rises to a steel catwalk that accesses the second floor.

Despite the architecture's majesty, the interiors actually exude intimacy, both in the grand main areas and in the private rooms, where the ceiling heights descend to a more human, though still lofty, 14 feet—among them the master suite and guest quarters. “The objective was to ensure that the homeowner would be as comfortable on his own as when he is entertaining,” Murphy remembers. Explains Fink, “Finding that balance between rough and fine, casual and dressy, keeps everything approachable.”

From the laid-back contours of the tufted, leather-clad sofas in the library to the formality of the dining room's klismos chairs, it's a dazzling mix. And one made all the more so through strategically placed 20th-century treasures, including George Nakashima stools and Pierre Jeanneret chairs. “It was a pleasure to just look at, let alone buy, wonderful things for the house,” notes Fink, who also hung the vast rooms with gutsy photographs by Matthew Brandt, Anne Collier, and Thomas Ruff.

Subtlety as the sun-drenched interior spaces may be, the 40-foot-long infinity pool is perhaps the home's most compelling feature. Placed on axis with the entrance hall, the pool shoots off from the rear of the house to the farthest edge of the cantilevered property.

Surrounding it are generous outdoor entertaining areas punctuated by boxwood spheres and century-old olive trees, the work of landscape designer Scott Shrader. Here, the owner's cerebral friends tend to congregate in fine weather, engrossed in lively discussions as well as poolside relaxation. As Fink says, “He immediately started using the house for all the things he'd envisioned.” And there's no heartier endorsement than that. ☐

Opposite: The floor lamp in the library is from Aero, as is the circa-1940 table, which is ringed by vintage Thonet armchairs. At right stands a Vixen telescope, the perfect tool for taking in the home's wide-open views of L.A. and Santa Monica.



Clockwise from top left: On the terrace, Summit Furniture armchairs surround the fire pit, while the firm's chaise longues are positioned near the pool, shaded by a Janus et Cie umbrella; the dining table and chairs are by Dedon, and in the background is a totemic John McCracken sculpture. A walnut backsplash and vintage George Nakashima barstools warm the kitchen, which is outfitted with a Viking cooktop, hardware by the Nanz Co., and marble flooring from Exquisite Surfaces. The house's stucco exterior was color-matched to a Benjamin Moore white, and the glazing is by Hope's Windows. In the great room, a Poul Kjaerholm leather-top stool from Suite Kiv is grouped with a Vladimir Kagan sofa from Ralph Pucci International; the vintage Jules Leleu sideboard is from Maison Gerard, and the carpet is by Holly Hunt.





Works by Thomas Ruff, Gary Schneider, Anne Collier, and others hang in the great room. A floor lamp from Aero joins a white Holly Hunt armchair, a circa-1950 Italian chair, and a Jean Prouvé cocktail table; in the center is another Poul Kjerholm armchair from Suite NY.



Right: An Aero stool sits beside an Agape tub in the master bath, which features marble mosaic floor tile by Waterworks; the photograph is by Joss Picayo. Below: Works by Mark Sheinkman (left) and Susan Derges hang in the master bedroom, flanking the door to the bath; the curtains are of a Ralph Lauren Home fabric, the sofa and custom-made carpet are by Michael Berman, and the ottomans are vintage George Nakashima. Opposite, counterclockwise from top: in a guest room, a Christopher Williams photograph is displayed above a Ralph Lauren Home bed; a vintage desk from Aero is paired with a Nanna Ditzel chair from Wyeth, and the curtain fabric and the carpet are both by Holly Hunt. In the same room, a Robert Rauschenberg painting surmounts a custom-made Blackman Cruz daybed upholstered in a Holland & Sherry linen. The shower fittings, shower shelf, teak stool, and mosaic-tile flooring in one guest bath are all by Waterworks.

