



# View to a Thrill

A Laguna Beach designer gives glass-house glam a new indoor/outdoor groove

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**FIRED UP!**  
At 6,500 square feet, this glass, steel and stone house in the Hollywood Hills was designed to maximize its downtown-to-ocean views. The house's two separate wings are bisected by an infinity pool, which then spills into the Jacuzzi and second pool below.

“Bringing the outside in” may be one of the most overused phrases in Southern California design circles, but when done right, it can go from cliché to completely jaw-dropping. Especially when that “outside” is a prime Bird Street perch in the Hollywood Hills.

Property developer Brad Kuish knew that it was the site of a lifetime when he purchased the hillside property in 2005. Despite the lot's steep incline and mountains of building-code red tape, Kuish stayed true to his goal of building a house that would honor SoCal's obsession with indoor/outdoor living in a new way. So he enlisted Laguna Beach-based designer Paul McClean, whose portfolio is filled with the kind of less-is-more, larger-than-life aeries that come with five-star vistas.

For this project, Kuish wanted a glass and steel home that would be as much about big-ticket perks—the fully loaded theater, the state-of-the-art home automation, the custom-designed fire sculptures—as it would be about honoring the unique hillside site. To meet that demand,



**VIEW DAT!**  
In the master bedroom, neutral tones keep the focus on the cityscape. The designers paired B&B Italia's Charles bed and George sofa, both from Diva, with a vintage bench from DAO.

Designers Ryan and Josh Brown of Brown Design, Inc.

McClellan created a multilevel, two-sided house that appears to suspend above ground like a spaceship.

"The idea of a house hovering over the city seemed so appropriate for such a vertical site; to be aloof but connected to the city at the same time," says McClellan. "When you get way up there in the hills you feel so removed from the city, like you're up in the clouds, yet the city is so close. You can be back down on the Sunset Strip in two minutes. We really wanted to emphasize that."

To highlight that sense of floating above the fray, a sky bridge connects the home's two separate wings and a 25-meter-long pool runs between the two structures. From the front entrance, that narrow strip of water looks like an arrow pointing right down to the city below.

Which isn't a coincidence. McClellan says that almost all of the design decisions took their cues from the outside. He designed the main indoor living spaces with an eye toward maximizing the view, and built below natural grade to allow a second story for a total of five bedrooms and seven baths. McClellan also created nearly 2,000 square feet of outdoor space, complete with a limestone waterfall rising out of the pool and an outdoor projector for al fresco film viewing. One level down, in an intimate alcove on the other side of the pool, is the Jacuzzi, a secluded spot perfect for taking in the city lights.

But even with the best architecture, Kuish knew that decorating the house would be key. And who better than *Flipping Out*'s Ryan Brown and his brother Josh? Known for their high-impact mix of organic, modern and glamorous design, Ryan and Josh were perfectly suited to trick out the space.

"It's quite a stunning feat," says Ryan, of the architecture. "Brad and Paul managed to make it modern, but at the same time it has this tremendously warm feeling. It's not one of those stark concrete and glass contemporary homes."

To bring even more warmth inside the glass and steel frame, the brothers started with a neutral palette, then layered in plenty of interesting textures and natural touches—adding the earth factor to the fire and water elements installed by Kuish and his team.

First things first, the brothers stained the wide plank oak floors a warm gray to bring a traditional element into the modern space. To create the home's signature look—one the brothers describe as "sexy sophistication"—they went about mixing vintage finds with new, glamorous pieces.

In the sky bridge entryway, for example, the Brothers Brown took a space that many would relegate to pass-through status, and elevated it into a sitting room with a cool vintage





**NEUTRAL TERRITORY** *Left:* Lawson-Fenning's Madison desk, Eames' Management chair by Herman Miller, available at Jules Selzter, and a pair of Minotti's leather Capri chairs are all found in the office. *Below:* The foyer area goes glam with a faux crocodile wingchair from Downtown and a Minotti brass side table. *Opposite page:* In the living room, the Browns mixed a pair of vintage high-back chairs from Lawson-Fenning, an onyx table from Minotti and Alison Van Pelt's Dove painting.

club chair covered in sexy faux croc and a modern brass side table. Now it's one of the prime spots for catching a glimpse of those city lights.

The biggest challenge, explains Ryan, was creating an interior look that wouldn't take away from the outdoor beauty. "That said, you don't want to put boring furniture in a house."

To finesse an eclectic yet restrained interior, the brothers kept color to a minimum, and instead concentrated on scale, texture and one-of-a-kind finds to create a mix that is mostly beige, but never boring. To pop the all-white kitchen, the two searched for just the right light, eventually finding a set of Lucite tubes they picked up at Blackman Cruz. "They add whimsy, depth and detail to the room," says Josh.

Upstairs in the master suite, there's a rich mix of silks, leathers, wood and cashmere. But it's the bedroom's disappearing glass walls that make the biggest splash of all. On a warm day, away they go, practically turning the suite into a glammed-up patio, and giving off a tree-house-meets-lounge effect that blends a city aesthetic with an outdoorsy vibe. Because, at the end of the day, it's those views, those boundless views, that offer the best décor of all. ■

