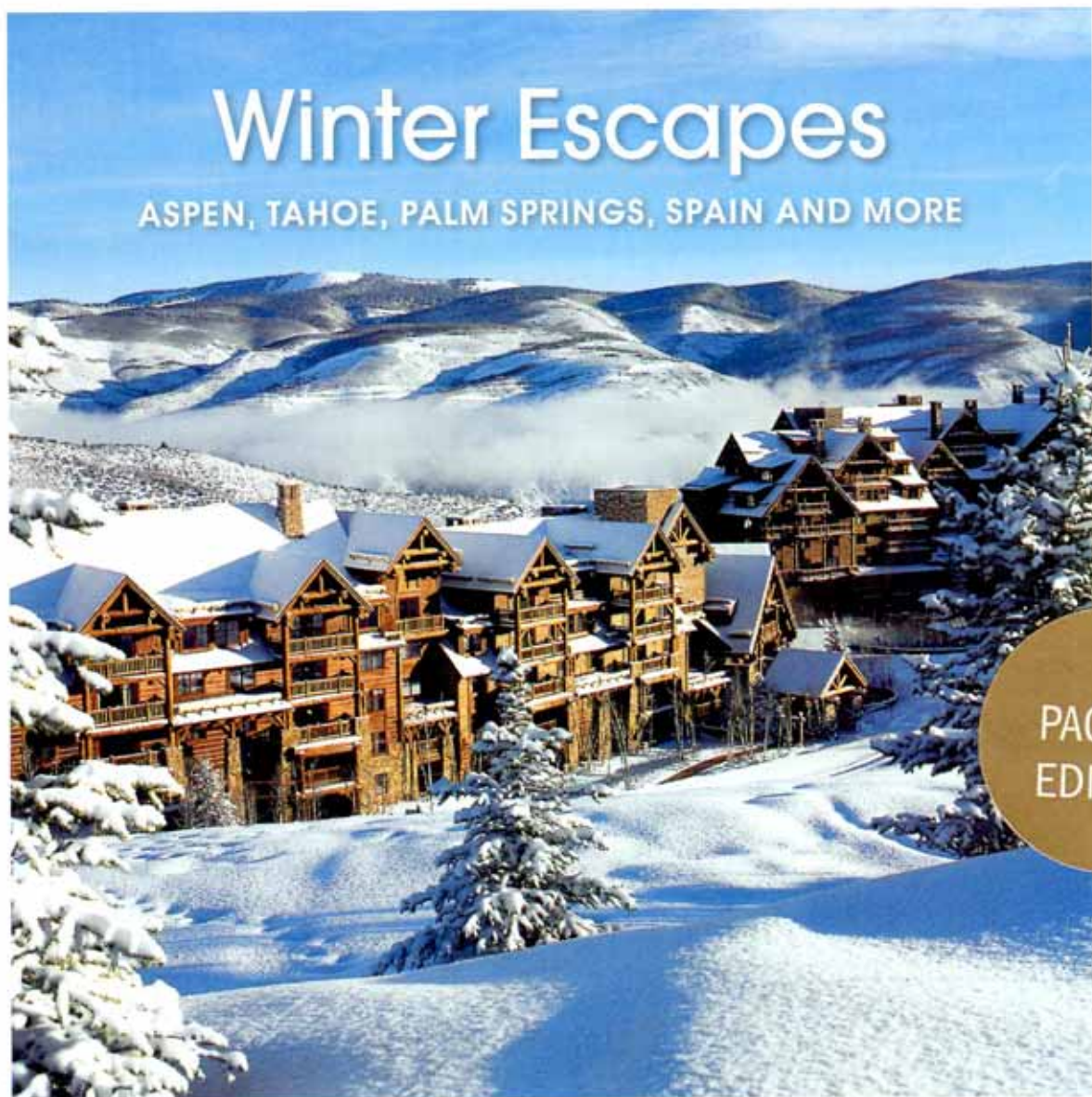


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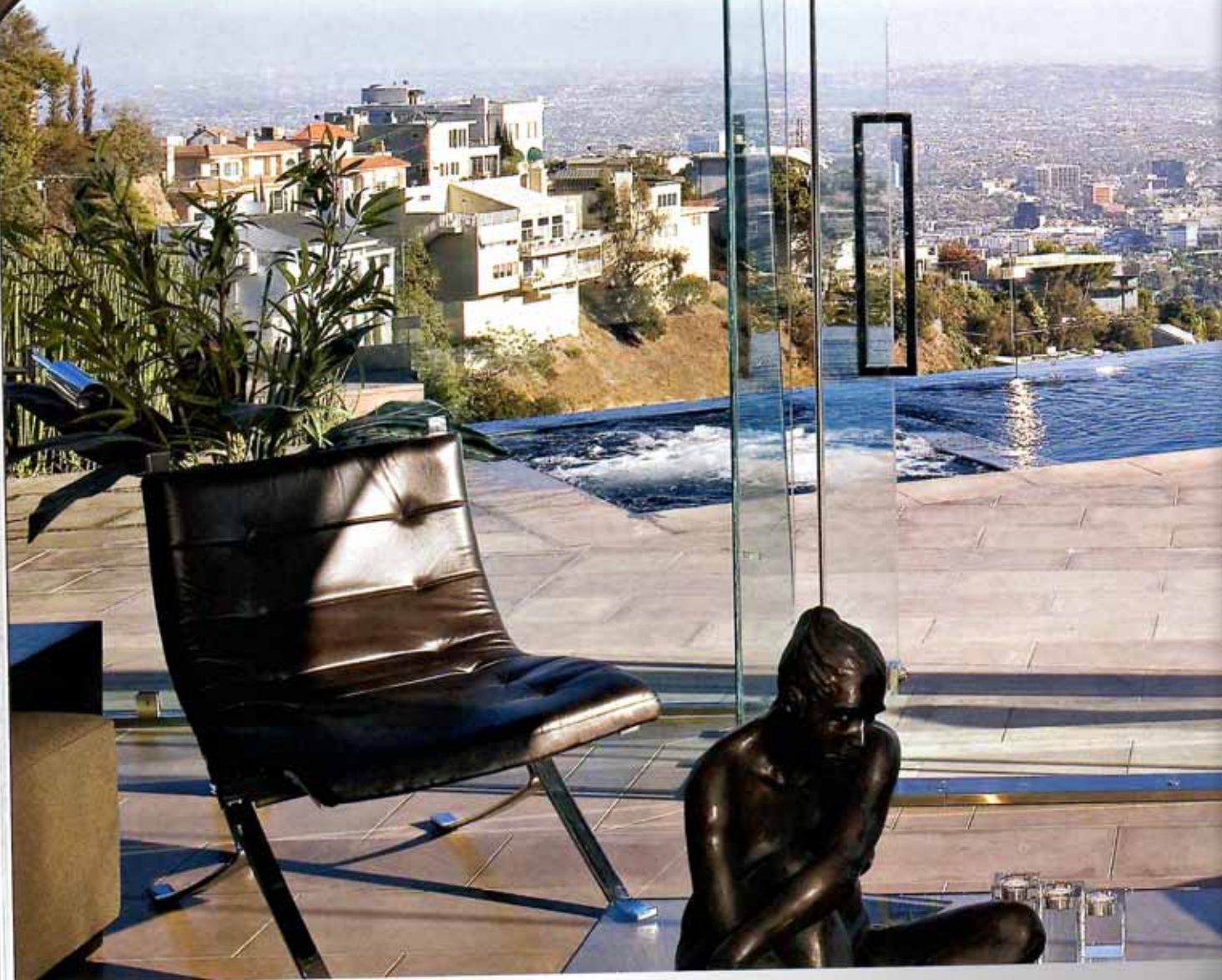
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# The Hollywood View

An actor's  
modernist vision  
high above  
Tinseltown.

BY ANDREW MYERS  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
KENNETH JOHANSSON

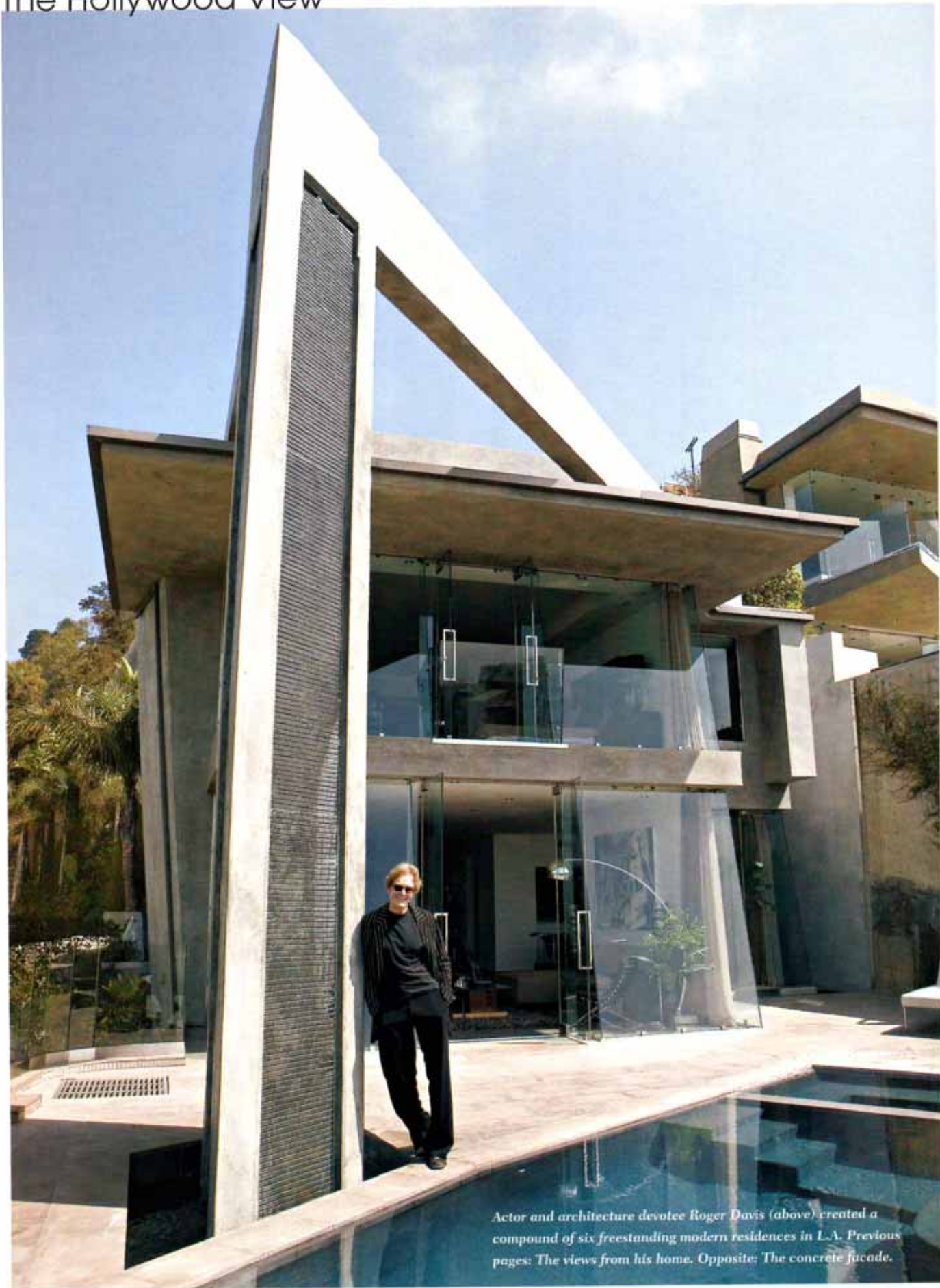








# The Hollywood View



*Actor and architecture devotee Roger Davis (above) created a compound of six freestanding modern residences in L.A. Previous pages: The views from his home. Opposite: The concrete facade.*





**H**OW IS DESIGNING AND BUILDING a group of six luxury houses perched on a once-inhospitable tract of near verticality in the Sunset Plaza area of Los Angeles like making a movie? Owner of a hyphenate hybrid that only the union of Kentucky and Southern California could produce, Roger Davis—actor-architectural designer-developer-gentleman—is uniquely positioned to expound.

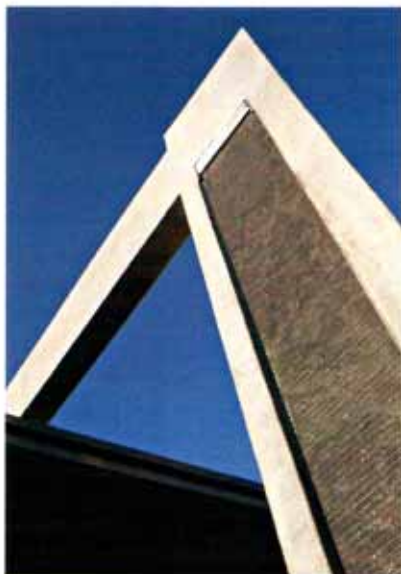
But first the trailer. Bullets fly, sirens blare, the attack causes mass chaos and as yet untold casualties. Even so, Michael Bay's 2001 *Pearl Harbor*, a portion of which Davis watches from the safety of this house's home theater as technicians finish its installation and fine-tuning, affects him personally. "See that man playing a Japanese admiral? That's Mako." He points to the actor onscreen once nominated for an Academy Award. "Nice guy, died last year. I did maybe four films with him." A long pause. "But what do you think of the sound? THX. Incredible, isn't it?"

In that handful of sentences Davis' duo careers converge. There was acting—starring roles in *Dark Shadows* and Aaron Spelling's *Alias Smith and*

*Jones* in the late 1960s and early '70s, hundreds of subsequent appearances on screens big and small, thousands of commercial voice-overs, even a marriage to Charlie's Angel Jaclyn Smith. And there was architecture—from undergrad classes at Columbia University to renovating, designing and building houses in Beverly Hills, Malibu and the Hollywood Hills, to massive developments and renovations in Louisville, Ky., which included a 21-story

Georgian-inspired luxury condominium tower and the Seelbach Hotel (a landmark dating from 1905), to this approximately 5,000-square-foot house, its five brethren, and the hundreds of caissons upon which they and their 50-foot retaining walls stand, all necessary to support Davis' vision: "A half-acre flat lot in the hills is one in a hundred, if that. Most of the homes are cliffhangers, and most of the 'new' homes are renovations."

As with many a Tinseltown project, the underlying concepts that inspired and catalyzed this blockbuster can be broken down categorically. First came form: a sculptural, sexy venue oriented toward the I-can-see-







*Clockwise from top: The living room, dining room and den all display paintings by artist Daniel Maltzman. Opposite: A sculptural hall.*

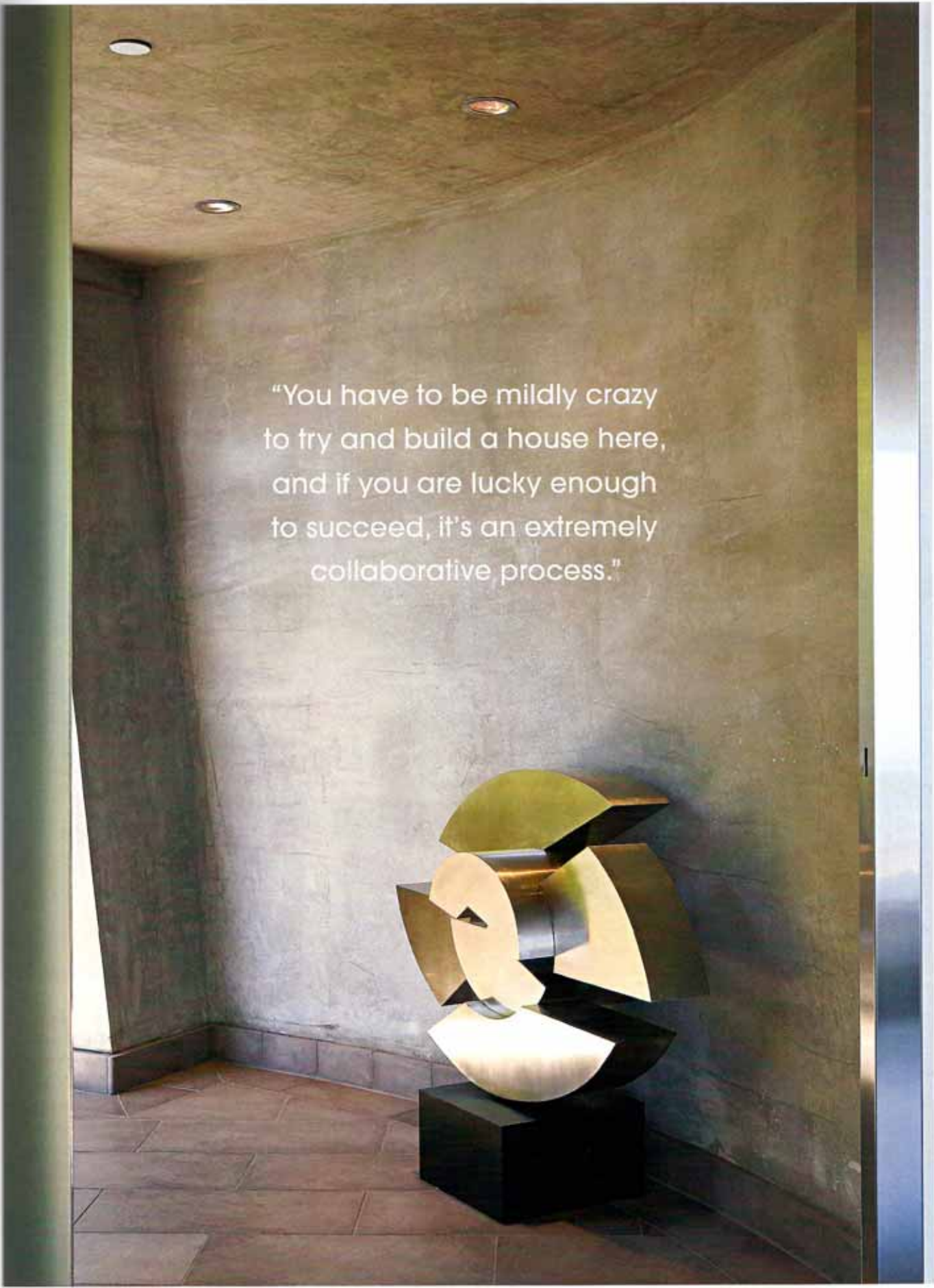
forever views; expanses of custom-fitted glass designed to delight but not distract (such as the living room and master bedroom's seamless glass walls, which run floor to ceiling at a nine-degree angle); and "linear and radial planes to make the space more interesting—not just a box," Davis explains.

Then followed function. Hillside homes are often as dysfunctional as they are disjointed, with public rooms at street level, private rooms below, and postage stamp-size yards and pools lower still. Here, however, the pool and yard are flush with the main living level, with bedrooms above, and home theater and multi-purpose spaces be-

low—a logical arrangement that transcends the prosaic to become poetry because of Davis' third, carefully considered component: flow. Floor plans are open; materials bridge indoors and out without interruption (such as the Italian limestone in the living room, which stretches to the patio and disappears into the infinity pool); the home's three-story staircase, made from teak, stainless steel and glass, floats.

"I tried to keep cool and warm surfaces balanced throughout the house," says Davis, who achieved this feat by employing smooth-troweled stucco, glass, stainless steel, teak and Brazilian walnut for the exterior, reserving



A photograph of a modern interior space. The walls are covered in a textured, light-colored material, possibly stone or plaster. The ceiling is also textured and features several recessed circular lights. In the foreground, a large, abstract sculpture made of polished, reflective metal pieces is mounted on a dark, rectangular base. The sculpture consists of several curved, overlapping planes that create a complex, three-dimensional form. The floor is made of large, square tiles in a warm, brownish tone. The overall atmosphere is sophisticated and minimalist.

“You have to be mildly crazy  
to try and build a house here,  
and if you are lucky enough  
to succeed, it’s an extremely  
collaborative process.”





limestone, teak, glass and granite for the interiors. It is the details, however, that make the eyes pop. On closer inspection, the master bathroom's floor tile turns out to be a textured, stainless-steel inlay. Windows—custom-designed then fabricated by L.A.-based Industry Glass—sometimes house additional second windows, which can be opened and, with no structural elements between the

*Above: The nighttime view from the master bedroom, which includes a pair of Mies van der Rohe chairs from the 1970s flanking a 1960s steel chess table, an oversize flokati rug and a custom-designed bed with a leather headboard. Left: The screening room.*





It is closer to to om— can the n— ing m— om.

glass sections, appear nearly invisible when closed. Not even the lighting system is simply that: "There are nearly 100 ceiling lights per floor, narrow spots on dimmers that pool the light at floor level so, at night, it balances with the thousands of city lights outside," Davis says.

While the house on Viewmont Drive is a cinema for the senses and the development as a whole epic in scope, how *exactly* was its conception and construction like movie making? Davis laughs. "First you have to be mildly crazy to try, and if you do, and are lucky enough to succeed, it's an extremely collaborative process," he says, explaining that Los Angeles architect Angelo Caciola and engineer Jonathan Sagharian were "sine qua non" in the achieve-

ment of his vision. But perhaps it is the idea of a vision, and the struggle in making the abstraction tangible that is the broader context in which Davis' two worlds meet. "Architecture is my delight, and the putting up and pulling down one of my favorite amusements," Davis says in an actorly voice, quoting Thomas Jefferson as he charges out the front door, heading to the neighboring house where construction is just finishing. ☐

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