



behind
the glass

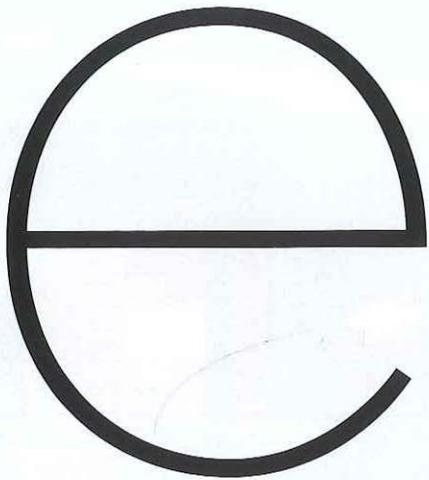


Mark and Andrea Meyerhofer's La Cañada Flintridge home. "We injected the house with warmth by using woods," Mark says.

WHEN A MID-CENTURY HOUSE COULDN'T BE PUT BACK TOGETHER AGAIN, ITS OWNERS RE-IMAGINED A REMARKABLE DWELLING IN ITS FOOTPRINT

BY KATHRYN HARRIS PHOTOGRAPHED BY LAURA HULL

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entering Mark and Andrea Meyerhofer's home in the foothills of the Sierra Madre Mountains is like stepping back in time. But this mid-century marvel has a secret: It's actually a 21st-century creation.

They relate this tale while perched on the white leather Poltrona Frau Kennedee couch in the living room, fittingly sipping

7-and-7s (whiskey and 7-Up). The family purchased the timber-framed house that once stood on this plot in 1998. "We fell in love with its simplicity, and as lovers of nature, the way it opened up to the backyard," says Andrea. Mark, an electrical engineer, and Andrea, a fund-raiser for Childhelp for the prevention and treatment of child abuse, set about tweaking and extending the home themselves but realized the disrepair ran too deep. Decamping to a small rental along with their two sons (Kurt, now 22, and Chris, 20), the couple let professional architects move in to remodel—bumping out the kitchen and adding a family room. A year in, disaster struck. "We discovered an alluvial sediment that flowed down the mountains over centuries and collected beneath the lot, leaving unstable silt," says Mark. "There was no choice but to demolish the property and start from scratch."

While a grim prospect for most, it was one the couple embraced as an opportunity. "I've always liked doing things out of the norm," says Mark, who was determined to build a new home as an homage to the original.

And not just in looks, either. Andrea and Mark insisted on the sort of detail that would have made Frank Lloyd Wright proud. "The post-and-beam construction of the first structure demanded a high level of perfection and finish," says Mark.

Together with Michael Pinto of Osborn Architects and

interior designer Jamie Bush, they came up with a set of rules to establish its design. "We debated how one surface would meet and interact with another, what would appear to float and what would not," says Andrea. The planning process alone took three years, and the foundation work another three (including two years to install a network of pillars beneath the house to anchor it to the bedrock). "At some point you realize complaining won't make it faster and you just learn to deal," says Andrea, who wanted the kitchen and its adjoining dining area at the center of the house. Another consideration was the multi-functionality of walls as visual screens, built-ins and to hide the SMART panel in the kitchen.

In all, from blueprint to completion, construction took a little longer than your average new-build. But that's fine, says the upbeat couple. "Even though we didn't move in until 2008 [a decade after buying the property], we learned to be patient and that getting every detail right was worth it," says Mark.

He's right; the finish is beautiful. The edited selection of materials—slate floors, redwood panels, stone walls, steel beams—repeated throughout the house lends simplicity and warmth. "We acquired the wisdom of minimizing and not being too busy," says Mark. The neutral canvas allows for rich, textured interiors with shots of color. There's a play of serious, museum-quality vintage pieces with contemporary ones, together with ethnic and handcrafted elements that reference the couple's love of travel, plus dashes of pure caprice. "It really expresses who we are," says Andrea.

When Mark's not in his study or Andrea in the Bulthaup kitchen, they decompress in the family room, in front of the TV. "One of my tests for choosing the furniture was whether I could take a nap in it," Mark jokes. However, their love of skiing, fishing and hiking is always leading to new adventures in the surrounding countryside.

The couple, married for 28 years, appears content in the new-old home. Adds Andrea, "It feels like a piece of art set in nature—like living in a dream." •

An Espenet table
and Finn Juhl chairs
in the dining room.
Hanging are PH
Artichoke lights
from Louis Poulsen.







TOP, FROM LEFT The pool is meant to look like just a carved hole in the house's stone platform. The orange front door echoes those of the original home. Everything spins out from the central informal dining area. CENTER The Meyerhofers wanted to recreate the way the first house opened up to the outdoors. BOTTOM, FROM LEFT The staircase, framing the library, was inspired by Mexican architect Luis Barragan's designs. A Serge Mouille lamp and claret-colored De Sousa Hughes chairs in the family room. Mark's study, with a driftwood-based desk and skull lamp from Blackman Cruz.

