ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

TOUR DIRECTOR MICHAEL BAY'S MODERN THREE-STORY STUNNER

Filmmaker Michael Bay's latest hit is a cinematic Los Angeles home where macho minimalism meets high-octane architectural drama

Text by Mayer Rus | Photography by Roger Davies | Produced by Michael Reynolds

Feats of architectural derring-do have long had their place in the hills and canyons of Los Angeles, where gravity-defying midcentury landmarks such as John Lautner's Sheats-Goldstein residence and Pierre Koenig's Stahl House test the structural and aesthetic limits of cliffside living. New to that esteemed lineage is the recently completed home of Michael Bay, a filmmaker known for action-packed big-budget blockbusters like the *Transformers* series, *Armageddon*, and *Pearl Harbor*. From such a maestro of spectacular effects one might expect a place with more than just a hint of drama. It does not disappoint.

"Everyone involved in the project said this was the toughest thing they've ever built," says Bay, who likens the four-year process to the production of an epic movie, with himself, naturally, in the director's chair. Given the extraordinary team he assembled—a cast of thousands, as it were, fit for a Cecil B. DeMille showstopper—the metaphor is perfectly apt.

Miami architect Chad Oppenheim came up with the original concept for the 30,000-square-foot, three-story dwelling, modeling its sculptural massing of rectilinear forms and astonishing cantilevers after an unrealized proposal he had for a group of Caribbean villas. “I wanted the house to have the feel of a resort,” recalls Bay, who is based in Miami but uses the residence for parties and relaxation during trips to L.A. “I looked at the first sketch Chad showed me and said, ‘That’s the house I want!’ ” Architect Mark Rios of the L.A. firm Rios Clementi Hale Studios, in turn, translated that vision into nuts-and-bolts reality, collaborating closely with decorator Lorraine Letendre, who created the main living and bedroom spaces. Designer Lynda Murray, meanwhile, tackled the spa, gym, and lower-level guest quarters. Add to this formidable roster of talent a battalion of contractors, engineers, artisans, and consultants, and one begins to fully grasp the ambition of the undertaking.

Due to the architecture’s complexity and the challenges of the steep, nearly eight-acre lot—not to mention Bay’s Hollywood-honed inclination to analyze every aspect of an experience—the director enlisted the help of a gaming software company to create an advanced digital model. So prior to construction Bay was able to explore sight lines, light conditions, and space progressions in the same way that players navigate the labyrinthine worlds of video games. “When it comes to this kind of technology, architects are working in the Dark Ages,” he says.

Considering its size, the house makes a relatively discreet impression from the street, with much of the structure’s bulk carved into the hillside and concealed from view. Once encountered straight on, however, the scheme is a tour de force of architectural acrobatics, its breathtaking overhangs and column-free spans engendering a palpable sense of weightlessness. This quality is perhaps most eloquently expressed in the two independent volumes balanced atop the house’s main level—one a bedroom suite for Bay, the other for VIP guests.

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