

Thirty pioneering houses designed by architects for themselves over the past decade, which reveal the ingenious ways they have addressed the challenges of creating a contemporary living space

# Architects' Houses

Michael Webb

350 illustrations

29.0 x 23.0cm

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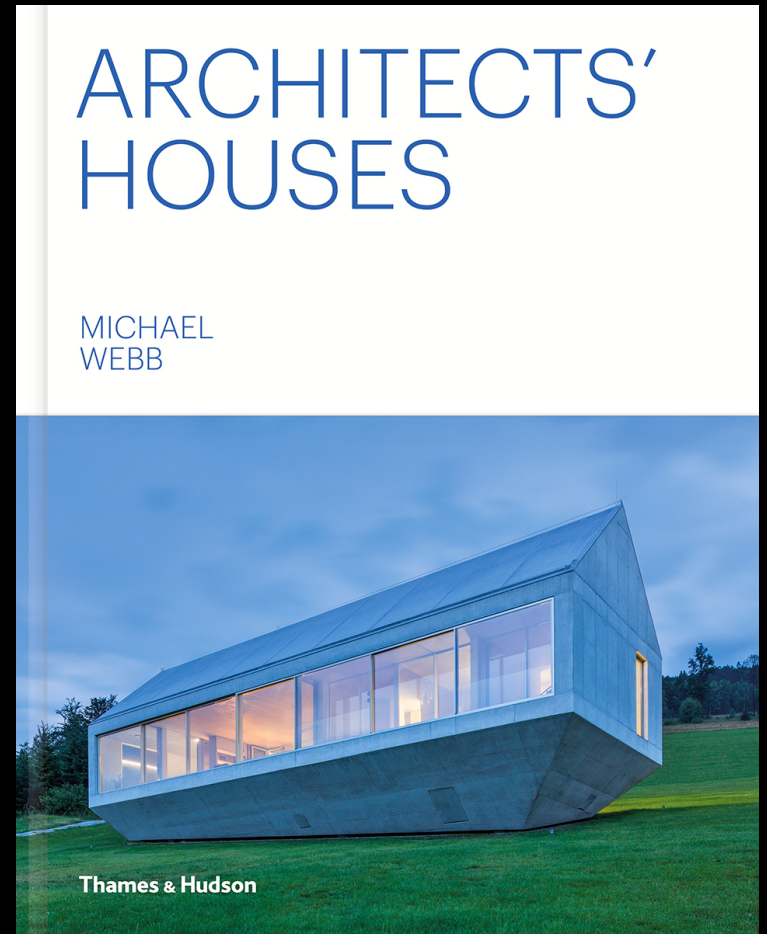
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## Key Sales Points

- Reveals thirty visionary homes of today's leading international architects, in which professional experimentation and day-to-day life converge to produce seamless living environments
- Living spaces that architects have designed for themselves and their families offer a treasure trove of ideas for practitioners, home owners and interior designers
- From mountain cabins to state-of-the-art seaside dwellings, the featured houses provide a snapshot of the latest ideas and preoccupations of today's up-and-coming and established architects

“A good house is a created thing made of many parts economically. It speaks not just of the materials from which it is made, but of the intangible rhythms, spirits, and dreams of people’s lives. Its site is only a tiny piece of the real world, yet this place is made to seem like an entire world. In its parts it accommodates important human activities, yet in sum it expresses an attitude toward life.”

Charles Moore





# NORMAN FOSTER

## LA VOILE

### CAP FERRAT, FRANCE

The best architects welcome constraints, as a challenge to their creativity and problem-solving skills. Lord Foster's career is full of such encounters, including the Sackler Galleries at the Royal Academy in London, where an uncompromisingly new wing is juxtaposed with the eighteenth-century original, and the Médiathèque in Nîmes, where a steel and glass pavilion engages a Roman temple in a graceful *pas de deux*. The house that Foster and some colleagues built for his family on Cap Ferrat was much smaller than both these projects, but no less exacting.

Foster and his wife, Elena, liked this particular stretch of coast, for its natural beauty and convenient access to the airport at Nice. The problem was that the French government, confronted with the venality of local mayors who have conspired in the degradation of the Côte d'Azur, decided to administer planning controls from Paris, enforce them strictly, and protect this peninsula from unsightly

development. "You couldn't demolish or build anything; all you could do was convert," says Foster. "A pretty elastic word, although the rules were quite complex. The only property we could find was a five-story tower—a depressing looking building from the 1950s. It was the most extreme exercise in ingenuity to create what we did. Any sane person looking at the house would have said, "You are absolutely mad!"

Foster sketched his options for transforming this stack of floors and cell-like rooms into a light-filled belvedere that would draw in the natural beauty of the Mediterranean landscape, and provide a haven for family and friends. The unsightly stump was pushed out towards the street and, at the base, with a podium of four guest rooms, whose roof forms a terrace for a four-story living/dining room that acts as the social heart of the house. "The building and demolition work was like keyhole surgery," explains Juan Vieira,

Two curved steel beams and a skin of steel cables support a canopy of stretched canvas that shades the pool. A terrace for the four-story living/dining room extends over a podium of four guest rooms.







# THOM MAYNE

## NOHO

### LOS ANGELES

From the day he cofounded Morphosis, Thom Mayne has delighted in complexity, talking about his architecture in the same tone of breathless urgency that Martin Scorsese brings to his analysis of cinema. One struggles to keep up with the words, but the bold gestures of his buildings never fail to excite.

In contrast to the provocative structures for which Morphosis are best known, Mayne's new house is an enigma, half buried in a sloping corner site. He dubbed it NOHO (No House), because dense plantings will eventually conceal it from the street and its suburban neighbors. Already, pink bougainvillea clads the retaining wall to the north, a hedge screens the house to the west, and a row of olive trees rises above a courtyard and stepped herb garden to the east. King palms flank the street entry to the south, providing shade and privacy.

American author Ray Bradbury lived in the house that formerly occupied this site, and

his memory is honored by quotations laser-cut into a corten steel gate. Words are overlaid in the gate, which opens onto a wooden bridge spanning a lap pool. An automated glass panel slides back, and one descends into the subterranean living area to discover not a realm of shadows but a luminous vision of Eden. Pocketing glass sliders open onto the pool and landscaped courtyards, and light flows in from three sides and above. There are no barriers, and the only interior door is to the guest bathroom.

It's a house of voids and vistas, with a long east-west axis (emphasized by a projecting steel beam) and five shifts of level between the wine cellar and the cantilevered guest wings. Its 230sqm of enclosed space occupy only 18 percent of the permitted volume, in contrast to the mega-mansions that are destroying the character of similar communities in Southern California, but the house is precisely tailored to the needs and desires of a busy professional couple.





When the glass walls slide open, the house becomes a giant pergola (opposite). The kitchen/dining area is double height, the staircase triple, the living room double, and the bedroom single. Looking up from the foot of the central staircase, one can view all three levels (above).







Ray Kappe sits on the deck of the house he built for his family. Six concrete towers support laminated redwood beams that enclose a multilevel interior.

The residence that Kappe built for himself and his wife, Shelly, is often regarded as his masterpiece. Completed in 1967, it was shaped by its steep hillside site in Pacific Palisades, a mile to the north of the Eames House. After securing a permit and beginning construction, Kappe discovered that natural springs made it impracticable to build a conventional foundation, so he redesigned the house as a bridge of massive laminated beams spanning between and extending beyond six concrete towers set up to 12 m apart. The towers lofted a 370-sqm house at a 45 degree angle to the hillside, covering only 56-sqm of ground and sparing mature trees. They also served as skylit bathrooms, stairs, and studios—what Louis Kahn called “servant spaces.”

Large rectangular concrete pads provide a series of steps up the hill from the street to the entrance, which is tucked in below the cantilevered living room deck. The music of the springs, moist vegetation, rough wood, and low portal all suggest a Japanese tea house, but on a heroic scale. One discovers the house a piece at a

time, climbing finger-jointed steps from confined to soaring spaces. The steps ascend from the sunken studio to a sitting room looking over a living room, to the dining area, with an island kitchen and bedrooms at the upper level, leading out to the garden, from where a bridge leads back to the roof terrace. Eucalyptus trees shade the decks, and light from the clerestories at the sides balances that from the expansive windows at front and back.

Sir Michael Hopkins (1935–) and his wife and partner, Patricia (1942–), were newly married and studying at the Architectural Association in London when they bought a sixteenth-century house in Suffolk and spent the next ten years restoring it for themselves. The house-studio that launched their practice in 1976 was the polar opposite: a taut block of steel and glass that settled gracefully into a row of Regency houses in the London district of Hampstead. It was a declaration of principles and a test bed for the large commercial buildings they were planning. Michael, who had worked with Norman Foster, shared the latter’s fascination with the lightweight, factory-made elements of the Eames House and Buckminster Fuller’s Dymaxion House, but he and his wife’s debut as fledging architects had its own distinctive character. Even now, with Hopkins Architecture a global practice whose achievements range from the Glyndebourne Opera House in Sussex to new high-rise cities, their house remains a signature work and their principal home.



Michael and Patty Hopkins deftly inserted their live-work capsule into a row of Regency houses in north London.



# ANDREA & LUCA PONSÌ

## CASA MAREMMA, MAGLIANO IN TOSCANA

### ITALY



Italians owe allegiance first and foremost to their home city and region; the country comes second (unless, of course, the national team is playing). Andrea Ponsi is deeply attached to Florence and his studio in Oltrarno, but he was born in the Tuscan port city of Viareggio, and that is where he began his quest to remodel a seaside house as a weekend retreat. Finding nothing he liked and could afford, he moved south along the coast and was able to purchase half a hectare of land

in Maremma, an agricultural region of great natural beauty. The hilltop site surveys a rolling landscape of vineyards, olive trees, and farmhouses, with a view to Monte Argentario and the island of Giglio.

Building anything in Italy can be quite an ordeal, for construction is tightly regulated. In Maremma, no more new buildings will be approved away from existing settlements. Ponsi, however, was lucky: the former owner of the land he'd acquired had secured



a permit to build a traditional house for sale, and had already put in a drive and utility connections. The building department in the nearby town of Magliano approved the idea of a contemporary house within a very tight envelope, and made Ponsi an offer. If he would buy and demolish one of the ugly buildings they wanted to eliminate, he could add the footprint to his own house. That gave him an extra 35sqm, while the building code allowed a little more for a garage, permitting him to enclose 200sqm.

"This was a joint project with my son Luca, who is also an architect," says Ponsi. "We considered different designs, but the basic idea was clear: a house that echoes the horizontality of the landscape, gently descending to the horizon of the sea. It had to be simple and employ harmonious materials; it also had to be easy to maintain and secure when unoccupied." Ponsi and son devised a three-level structure in which the first floor is embedded in the hillside and exposed only on the entry facade.

# CRISTIÁN UNDURRAGA

## CASAS DEL HORIZONTE

### ZAPALLAR, CHILE

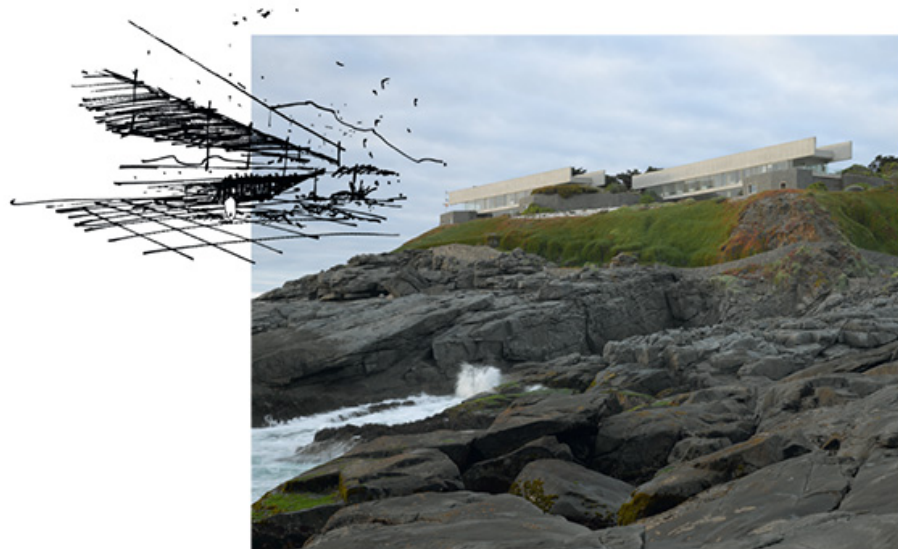


The twin holiday houses that Cristián Undurraga built for his extended family some 90 minutes by car from his office in Santiago were shaped by the rugged coastline. Modern beach houses are scattered up and down this narrow coastal strip between mountains and the Pacific, and it's become a highly desirable location. Undurraga found a half-hectare site atop the volcanic rocks that cascade 25m down to the ocean. "Nobody else wanted to live there because it adjoins a cemetery," he recalls. "For me that's ideal: it's quiet, will never be built on, and it's an extension of my garden—I love to walk there."

Undurraga has built ten houses, including two for himself in Santiago that he outgrew and sold, and he uses them as models for his firm's large projects. He and his wife have nine children, who are beginning to start families of their own, so they needed lots of space to get together on weekends

and holidays. The challenge was to create a house that was large but not overwhelming, and to conduct a dialogue with the wild landscape and the immensity of the ocean. Undurraga spent many hours exploring the site before sketching a horizontal line and turning that concept into two linear concrete blocks, staggered on plan. In each, the upper floor is suspended from prestressed concrete beams 2.4m deep and 44 and 48m long respectively; these in turn are supported by columns at either end and in the middle. This gives the structure the flexibility that's required in an active seismic zone.

As Undurraga began fleshing out his design, he thought of the Capilla del Retiro, a little chapel he was working on, as well as the underground cultural center that he had added to the Moneda Palace in Santiago, the residence of the Chilean president, where Salvatore Allende made





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