

# INTERIOR DESIGN<sup>®</sup>

NUMBER 1



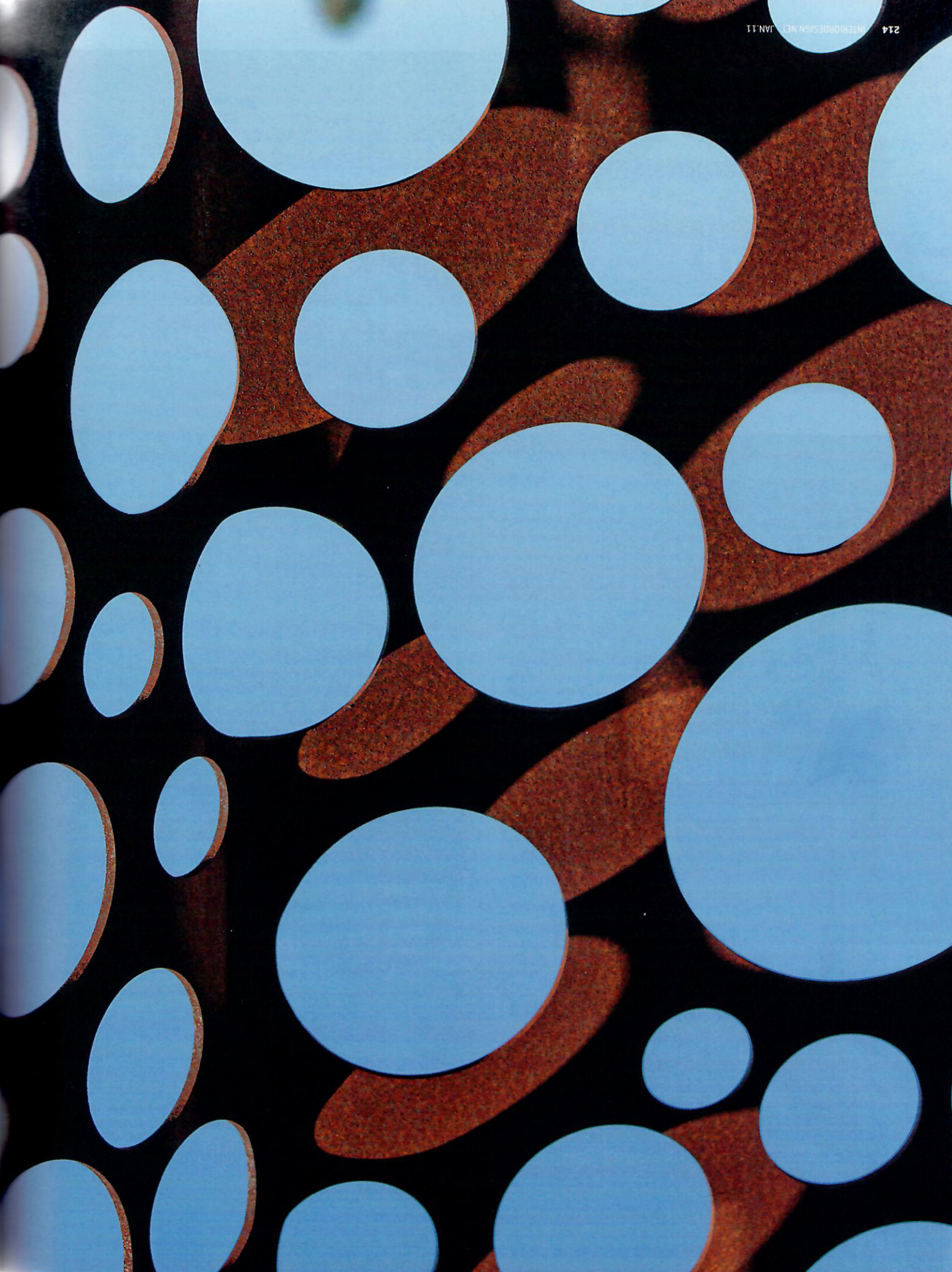
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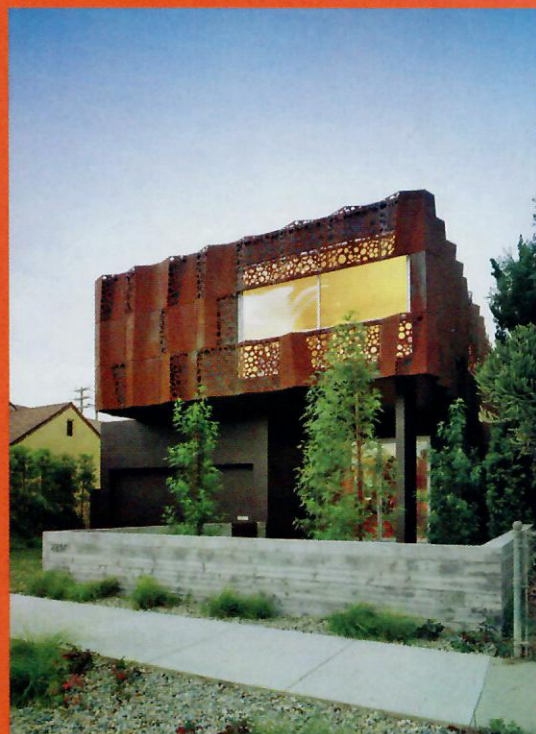
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text: **edie cohen**

photography: **benny chan/fotoworks**

# meet the parents



**With a family house in Los Angeles, Daniel Monti makes his mark**



**It's a rite of passage** for countless young architects launching an independent practice: designing a place for the parents. Daniel Monti, who cut his chops at *Interior Design* Hall of Fame members Leo Marmol and Ron Radziner's firm before founding Modal Design, has now completed a ground-up house in Los Angeles for the elder Montis, Susana and Roberto. This Venice dwelling joins their international portfolio of homes in Houston, Buenos Aires, and Le Canet in the south of France, and program requirement number one was *no fuss*. When the Montis breeze into L.A., what they really want is a place to enjoy their kids and grandchildren. Requirement number two was to preserve the site's 80-year-old umbrella pine. With a 60-foot-wide canopy and a trunk diameter nearing 5 feet, the tree dominates the rear of the Montis' property, dictating spatial organization outside and in.

In a sense, the result is a standard Venice house, a long rectangle responding to the standard narrow  $\frac{1}{8}$ -acre lot. The 2,700-square-foot, two-story layout also fits the paradigm. An all-in-one living-dining area and kitchen is essentially a one-story glassed-in pavilion jutting into the rear yard. In deference to the umbrella pine, the upstairs volume is massed up front. The master bedroom is a virtual tree house, given the proximity of the pine's spreading boughs. And all three bedrooms and two baths here are moderate or, better yet, *appropriate* in size. That, however, is where similarities to "standard Venice" come to an end.

A global citizen who was born in Caracas, Venezuela, and lived in Paris, New York, and Tehran before earning degrees at Texas A&M University and the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, Monti says he was "interested in dressing up the ubiquitous stucco box," bringing a whole new vocabulary to a part of Venice dense with 1920's bungalows. So, mouse a-clicking, he digitally designed a distinctive Cor-Ten steel scrim that's at once tough and lacy, whimsically ➤

**Previous spread, left:** Cor-Ten steel, cut by water jet with holes 2 to 8 inches in diameter, wraps the top level of a Los Angeles house by Modal Design.

**Previous spread, right:** Set behind a retaining wall of board-formed concrete, the house stands in a neighborhood dense with bungalows.

**Top:** Jeff Vioski designed the living area's sofa, chairs, and side table.

**Bottom, from left:** In the dining area, fiberglass shell chairs surround a table that's walnut, like the paneling and cabinetry. Left over from the exterior screen's fabrication, 3,000 steel rounds were welded together to form the staircase balustrade.

**Opposite:** The screen's panels are supported by a steel frame screwed to the house's pine framing.







artistic and no-nonsense functional as it wraps the house's upper level. Some of the steel panels are left intact; others, primarily in front of bedroom and bathroom windows, are perforated in varying patterns of circles to bring sunlight in but keep neighbors' eyes out. Accordion-style folds in the scrim bring dimension to the facade in addition to texture and the metal's characteristic rusty color. Pragmatically, the folds also increase the rigidity of the scrim.

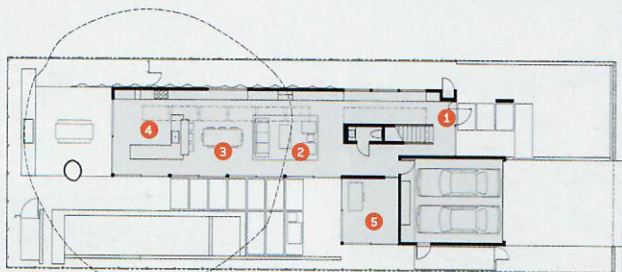
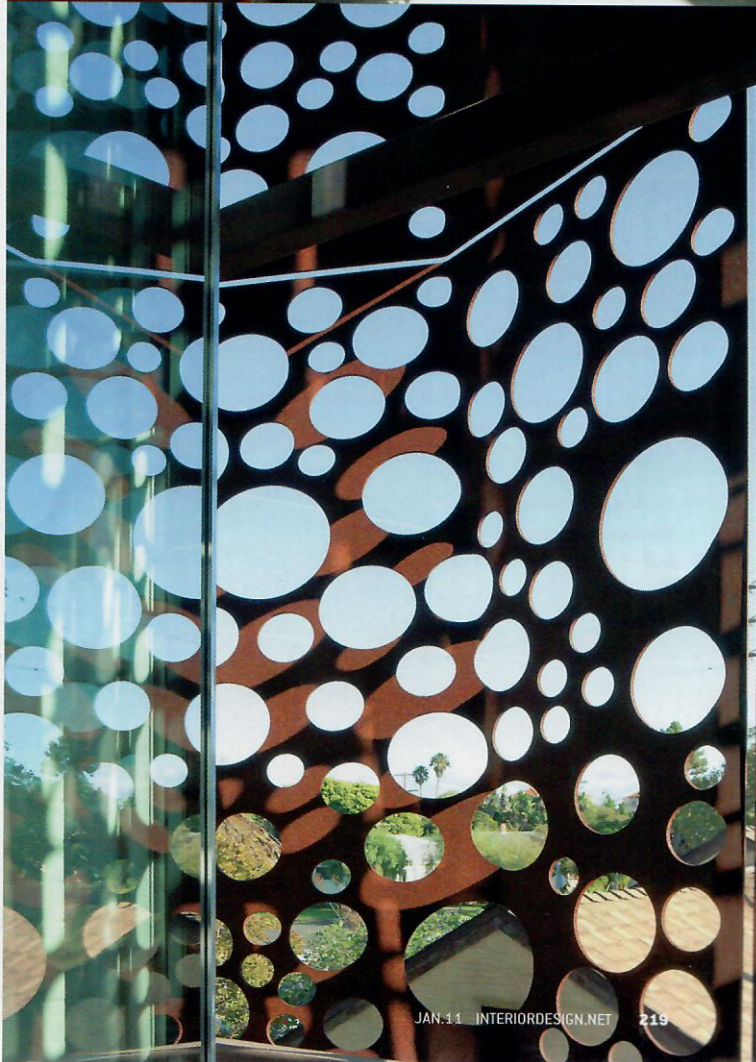
Its perforations makes their presence felt inside, too, most pervasively with the play of light and shadow. "Depending on the angle of the sun, rooms upstairs seem to change throughout the year," he explains. Then there's a more tangible manifestation. Left with 3,000 round steel cutouts of different sizes, he presented boxes of the disks to a metalworker with the directive to weld them together into 3-by-5-foot panels, compositions of circles and gaps. The welding process was completely organic—no templates, no drawings—and the panels it yielded now form the balustrade for the staircase and the upstairs landing, creating a positive-negative relationship with the scrim outside.

And that's just one aspect of Monti's conservationist bent. He designed and built the house with LEED Silver certification in mind. (He's still awaiting word.) Daylighting and natural ventilation rule in the public spaces, thanks to the glass sliders and the long skylights. The energy-efficient insulation, the drought-tolerant landscaping, and the recycling of 70 percent of construction waste likewise contributed to the effort. Reduce, reuse, recycle. The first part of that mantra is embodied by the house's limited materials palette as well. Ground-level flooring is radiant-heated concrete, mostly bare. Walnut is everywhere: cabinets that stretch down a sidewall from the front entry through the kitchen, the staircase, and the flooring on the second level, the pair of bathrooms included. Their walls are clad in restrained honed marble or basic subway tile.

Two of Monti's designer pals helped with the furnishings. Sarita Singh chose all the beds and bedside tables, the dining area's walnut Parsons table and white shell chairs, the living area's chunky ▶

**Opposite top:** An 80-year-old umbrella pine grows outside the master bedroom. **Opposite bottom:** Water spouting from a wall surfaced in glass mosaic tiles fills the 45-foot swimming pool.

**Top:** Flooring downstairs is radiant-heated concrete. **Bottom:** Digitally designed, the panels' perforated pattern is a repeating matrix.



- 1 ENTRY
- 2 LIVING AREA
- 3 DINING AREA
- 4 KITCHEN
- 5 OFFICE



leather-covered ottoman, substantial enamel-topped cocktail table, and hefty chairs and sofa, good for kids to jump on. Kenna Ryman advised on rugs, lamps, and pillows everywhere, plus bedding and outdoor furniture. Monti needed no assistance, however, in accessorizing the two-car garage. Its chocolate-brown stucco exterior all but disappears in relation to the front facade's Cor-Ten steel and sparkling glass. Until the door rolls up to reveal a 1964 Porsche 356 and a 1972 Alfa Romeo Giulia. ▀

#### PROJECT TEAM

**FIRE:** LIGHTING CONSULTANT. **FUTURE AUTOMATION & DESIGN:** AUDIOVISUAL CONSULTANT. **BENT GRASS LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE:** LANDSCAPING CONSULTANT. **C.W. HOWE PARTNERS:** STRUCTURAL ENGINEER. **JOHN DORIUS & ASSOCIATES:** MEP. **A&Y CUSTOM CABINETS:** WOODWORK. **E FABRICATION:** PRECISION WATERJET & LASER. **THATCHER SERVICES:** METALWORK. **BMH GENERAL CONTRACTORS:** GENERAL CONTRACTOR.

#### PRODUCT SOURCES

**FROM FRONT VIOSKI:** SOFA, CHAIRS, SIDE TABLE (LIVING AREA). **DOSA:** OTTOMAN. **WOVEN ACCENTS:** CUSTOM RUG. **CISCO BROTHERS:** COCKTAIL TABLE (LIVING AREA), TABLE (DINING AREA), BENCH (MASTER BEDROOM). **THROUGH WEEGO HOME:** PILLOWS (LIVING AREA), TABLE (CHILDREN'S ROOM). **MODERNICA:** CHAIRS (DINING AREA). **ENVIRONMENT FURNITURE:** STOOLS (KITCHEN). **CAESARSTONE:** COUNTER MATERIAL. **ANN SACKS:** BACKSPLASH TILE (KITCHEN), WALL TILE (BATHROOM). **BISAZZA:** WALL TILE (POOL AREA). **C.R. LAURENCE CO.:** SHOWER DOOR PULL (BATHROOM). **HYDRO SYSTEMS:** TUB. **MOUNTAIN PLUMBING PRODUCTS:** TUB FILLER. **DORNBRACHT:** TUB FITTINGS, SINK FITTINGS. **KOHLER CO.:** SINK. **TOTO:** TOILET. **THROUGH TILE EMPORIUM INTERNATIONAL:** VANITY COUNTER MATERIAL. **BLU DOT:** BED (CHILDREN'S ROOM). **IKEA:** BED LINENS. **THROUGH RETRO GALLERY:** LAMP. **STARK:** RUG. **ROOM & BOARD:** BED, PILLOWS, TABLE (MASTER BEDROOM). **CALVIN KLEIN THROUGH BLOOMINGDALE'S:** BED LINENS. **VISUAL COMFORT & CO. THROUGH CIRCA LIGHTING:** LAMP. **MICHAELIAN & KOHLBERG:** RUG. **THROUGHOUT METAL WINDOW CORP.:** SLIDING DOORS. **SUGATSUNE:** CABINET PULLS, DOOR PULLS. **NIKZAD:** WOOD FLOORING. **DUNN-EDWARDS CORPORATION:** PAINT.

**Top:** The master bathroom's vanity counter and wall tiles are both honed marble. **Bottom, from left:** Public spaces and the office surround the pool on two sides. The digital print in the children's bedroom is by Daniel Monti himself. **Opposite:** A photograph by Kim Zwarts hangs in the master bedroom.





