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VIEW — MASTER

STEVE HERMANN'S LATEST DESIGN INCORPORATES
GORGEOUS SIGHTS OF THE LOS ANGELES SKYLINE

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teve Hermann had plans to spend some time in his latest home set high in the Hollywood Hills. That is, until someone made him an offer he couldn't refuse.

"It was the highest price ever paid for a house in Los Angeles, based on cost per square foot," says the owner of Steve Hermann Design. The 4,900-square-foot home sold for \$12.6 million, and though the sale gave Hermann two weeks to move into a quick rental for the time being, the self-taught designer and builder isn't complaining.

The concept of the three-bedroom, four-bathroom house, originally a ranch that the designer took down to the foundation, was to take some references of mid-century modernism—including ample windows, an open floor plan, and bringing the outdoors inside—and translate them to today. The result is a New York-style loft that blends perfectly with a California lifestyle.

"I used to live in New York City—I went to school at NYU—and the ultimate dream I had in New York was to live in a loft," says Hermann, whose high-profile clientele includes Christina Aguilera, Courteney Cox, and Frankie Muniz. "I always wanted to live in some type of loft where you have very tall ceilings and wide open space. It was communal living instead of everything being sequestered in lots of little rooms." He accomplished this by putting more than half the square footage into the living room, dining room, and kitchen, housed in a 70-by-35-foot space with 13-foot ceilings and glass on three sides. The view: downtown Los Angeles all the way to the ocean, which Hermann calls "emotional."

The house begins with a 130-foot-long hallway, with glass on one side and a natural stone interior wall with insets for vases, and opens up to the great room and the view of the city, which figured prominently into the design. "When you're standing inside, it's hard to tell the difference between the inside and outside," says Hermann. "They became one."

Hermann found creative ways to define the rooms without adding walls. In the kitchen, he dropped the ceiling six inches, and between the living room and the dining room, the designer added a custom bench that became part sitting area, part orchid display. The area rugs also add to the separation.



LEFT: The hallway, 130 feet in length, features an entire wall of glass.

RIGHT: Hermann dropped the ceiling six inches in the kitchen to define the space from the great room without using walls.





ABOVE: Hermann used references of mid-century modernism—including ample windows, an open floor plan, and bringing the outdoors inside—to create a New York-style loft that blends perfectly with a California lifestyle.

BELOW: The master bedroom boasts a telescoping slider that opens the entire width of the room, revealing breathtaking views of Los Angeles.





Hermann sourced many of the fixtures and materials for the house from Italian designers. In the master bathroom, he chose fixtures from Agape. The glass sink is set in a high-gloss lacquered countertop, with only a glimpse of the sink's edging visible.

In the great room, the kitchen cabinetry is from Varenna, an Italian manufacturer, and the thin countertop is a brushed stainless steel. Hermann also wrapped stainless steel around the outside of the drop ceiling to unify the kitchen. The living room couches were custom-made from a Los Angeles-based company called Twentieth, while the dining room table is from B&B Italia, Hermann preferring the finishes and detailing of Italian design. The use of 4-inch recessed can lighting, lining the ceilings throughout the home, provides a sparkling, magical quality. "The effect from down below when you drive up to the house is quite impressive," says Hermann. "It looks like the house is ready to levitate off the cliff."

The flooring throughout the house is poured-in-place terrazzo, which Hermann says is the most expensive flooring available. "But the advantage is, it will last 100 years," he explains. "You can drop heavy equipment on it and it doesn't chip, splinter, or crack." The epoxy-based floor is mixed with marble chips and poured in place, then it's grinded down seven times to smooth it to a mirrored polish.

"It creates a sense of expansion in the house," says Hermann, whose career progressed from low-income housing real estate agent to flipping low-income houses to designing and building

multimillion-dollar homes. "You don't have changes in the flooring. You have the terrazzo and then you have area rugs to personalize it."

All the doors in the home are from TRE-Più, another Italian manufacturer. They are straight-grain oak with aluminum frames that have thin, hidden aluminum hinges.

The master bedroom offers one of the more intimate views, with a telescoping slider that opens the entire width of the room, sliding back into a hidden pocket inside the wall and revealing the deck and the city. The designer decided against a railing along the deck, not wanting to interrupt the view. "You have this feeling, sitting in bed, like you're flying over Los Angeles, coming down in a jumbo jet into LAX," Hermann says. The other walls in the room are a serrated limestone tile that was scraped with a wire mesh to create veins and texture. The furniture is by B&B Italia.

The master bath fixtures are from Agape, another Italian company. The countertop is high-gloss lacquer with an integrated glass sink that shows only a glimpse of the edging. The drain is cleverly hidden underneath the countertop. From the steam shower, the mostly glass room offers views of Century City and the ocean.

LEFT: A Jacuzzi with infinity edge is elevated inside the kidney-shaped pool, creating a fountain effect.

RIGHT: The theater features comfortably sleek seating and a built-in stage. Soundproofed walls add to the theater quality.





A movie theater boasts custom-built stadium seating, a built-in stage in natural straight-grain oak that frames the projection screen, and padded fabric walls to soundproof while creating the right effects inside for the theater's sound quality.

Outdoors, a Jacuzzi with infinity edge is elevated inside the kidney-shaped pool, creating a fountain effect. There is built-in seating lining the perimeter and three long fire pits placed in front, providing both warmth and a hypnotizing feel as the pool reflects the flames.

Hermann, who has been designing for more than 15 years, says he's never taken one class for his craft and prefers to create his own projects, such as this house, and then sell it once it's completely finished. "I don't have to make any compromises, and nobody is watering down my vision," explains Hermann, who primarily works in California. "Now I have quite a following here." ■