



Partly hidden from street view by a scrim of greenery, architect Ron Radziner's house looks like it grew from its garden plot. Blended indoor-outdoor spaces and curtain walls bring a tangle of native species to the doorstep. The home's secluded front door faces the pool.

Engaging Nature

The Vienna Way Residence interweaves indoors and outdoors, with sumptuous results. By Cheryl Weber, LEED AP



I'm always happiest in a house when I can't imagine it existing without the landscape," says architect Ron Radziner, FAIA. His home in Venice, Calif., is all but inseparable from the thicket of rushes and sedges, sycamores, and oaks that fill the 65-foot-by-175-foot lot. Interwoven with plantings that evoke California's creek and woodland flora—and partially screened from street view by all the foliage—it's the antithesis of the showy home that lounges on the lawn, as if preening for passersby.

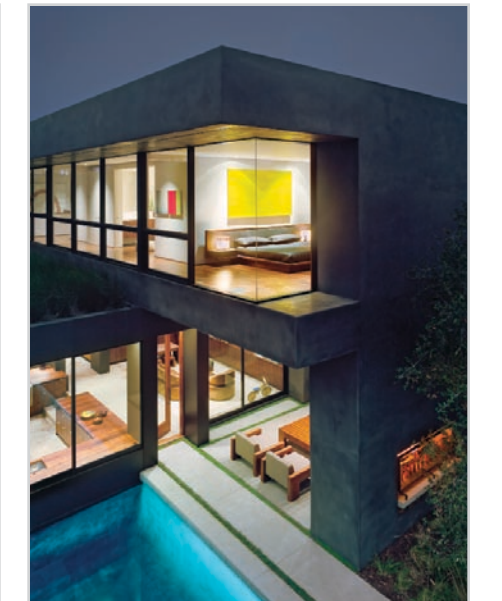
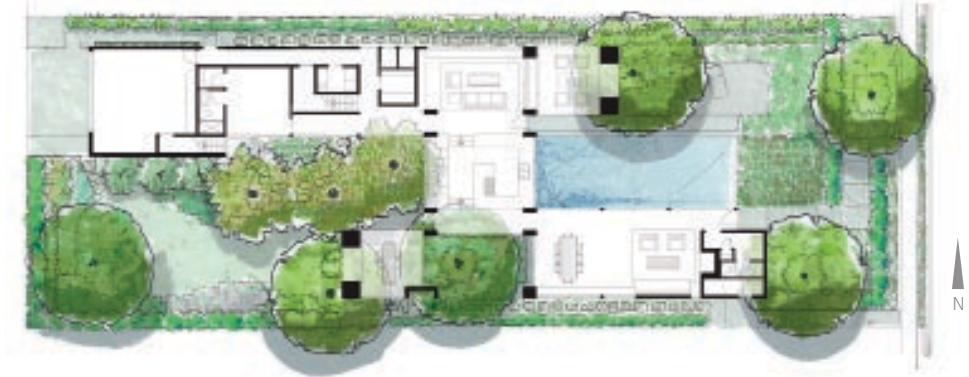
Radziner's Los Angeles firm, Marmol Radziner + Associates, has spent the last 20 years perfecting the design of spare, light-filled houses based on the California Modernist tradition of indoor-outdoor living.

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Radziner provided 360-degree views from almost anywhere in the house. The dining room looks across the pool to a covered outdoor seating area; bedrooms gaze upon the grass roof; and the sunken kitchen (below and opposite) puts the family at eye level with the pool and garden.

In Radziner's hands, the character and shape of the outdoor spaces became part and parcel of the design. A pool garden runs through the middle of the lot, tucked into a three-sided courtyard created by the two wings and the sunken kitchen. Dropping the walnut-wrapped kitchen and breakfast area a foot and a half created a spectacular visual connection to the garden in back and the pool in front. "The center band, in a way, has a water theme in both the architecture and the garden," he says. "There's the pool, and the kitchen is about water." The landscape in the middle third is densely planted with species found naturally along streams, such as wild grasses and sycamores, while the outer edges are filled with native oaks common to a drier California



Project Credits: Architect/Landscape designer/Builder: Ron Radziner, FAIA, Marmol Radziner + Associates, Los Angeles; Photographer: Joe Fletcher, www.joefletcherphotography.com.

So when Radziner and his wife, Robin Cottle, built their 4,100-square-foot house on a rare double lot in town, it, too, was an exercise in the value of merging architecture with nature.

Conceived as two bars on the north and south edges of the property, and bridged by a sunken kitchen pavilion to form an uneven "H," the house splits the lot into thirds lengthwise. Radziner placed the one-story public wing—living room, dining room, and dining terrace—on the south-facing street side. The north wing contains the private quarters—an office, family room, covered terrace with a fireplace, and four bedrooms above. Each glassy wing is just 18 feet wide, creating plenty of opportunities for light and interaction with the outdoors.

landscape. Second-floor bedrooms overlook the kitchen's billowy grass roof and the treetops. "There are no distant views to capture, so we tried to create our own private park," Radziner explains.

Often, the landscape becomes an add-on accessory to the house, rather than being designed at the same time. But here, the landscape weaves itself in and out of the architecture, so the two depend on each other visually. Reflecting on the process, Radziner says: "There's a lot of precision in how things align in architecture, but the whole time you're trying to contrast that with a looseness in the landscape, trying to make it feel like it's always been there. I think I'll be happiest with this house as the garden gets more overgrown and the house gets swallowed up by the landscape." ■

