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# Concrete solution

The same material was used inside and outside this beachfront home, creating a look that's tough, permanent and dramatic



A beach front location sounds unbeatable, but it often carries a number of building limitations, from the shape and geology of the site, to harsh weather conditions.

To achieve the best solution for their property in Malibu, California, the owners of this home ran a competition to find the architect with the best concept.

Santa Monica architect David Gray won the commission. His plan had taken into account a large number of constraints, including setback

and coastal guidelines, area limits, soils and geology, dunes and vegetation maintenance.

And then there were sight lines to the ocean and waves, and the long narrow shape of the property to consider, as well as all of the owners' requirements.

The owners wanted a beach house that would be relaxing to live in, low-maintenance and built from materials that would withstand the ocean air.

"The house had to make an architectural statement, be large and

*Above: This house, built on the beach front at Malibu, California, is finished inside and out with concrete. To give it a wooded look, architect David Gray used concrete poured in place between redwood board forms. The grain from the redwood has been impressed into the concrete, creating an effect similar to the graining of wood.*



*Above:* Because the site is long and narrow and because the owners wanted a separate guest suite, David Gray designed two buildings. The main house, on the beach front, is separated by a courtyard from the garage and guest suite on the road frontage. The house protects the courtyard from ocean winds.

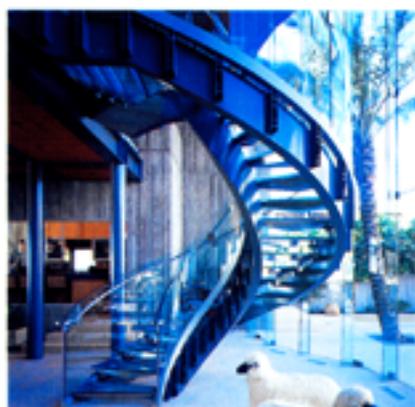
*Right:* The wall of the main house facing the courtyard is glazed with frameless structural glass. A steel staircase with glass treads leads to the second level of the house.

*Facing page:* A stream runs beneath the stairs leading from the garage to the main house.

dramatic enough to support the owners' art collection, be open and light and take advantage of spectacular views. It also had to have a courtyard area and swimming pool that were protected from the ocean winds," says the architect.

The owners liked the idea of a house built from concrete because of its qualities of toughness, permanence and fire-resistance.

To make the most of the long, narrow site, David Gray designed the house in two parts – a main building







overlooking the beach and a smaller second building by the road for the garage and guest suite. This is separated from the main house by a courtyard. The main house is on two levels, with the ground level living areas and upstairs bedrooms opening onto large decks, overlooking the beach.

The main house protects the central courtyard and swimming pool from ocean winds. The courtyard also connects the house with the garage and guest suite.

While the two buildings are physically separated, they are visually linked by a spring which trickles through from the street entrance.

"The stream in the stairs represents water running down towards the sea," says David Gray.

The materials in the house are simple and natural – concrete, steel and glass. The only wood is teak veneer paneling, which is used as a decorative element. The floors throughout the house are French limestone.

Four box-like concrete structures

form the side walls of both buildings and create another visual link between them. Each pair of boxes is interconnected by a steel frame which provides structural support.

The side of the house which looks into the courtyard is fully glazed over both levels. It features a series of structural glass sheets 25ft high by 50ft wide.

Most other walls, inner as well as exterior, are made from concrete which has been poured in place using redwood board forms. The grain of



the redwood has been impressed into the concrete and given it the look and grained patterning of timber.

So sun and light aren't blocked from the deck on the ground floor and indoor living areas, the upper deck is made from translucent laminated glass and cantilevered off the house.

Inside, a neutral color scheme, large, open spaces and double-height walls allow the owners to display their extensive collection of modern art.



*Facing page:* Concrete walls in the living room are offset by teak wood veneer paneling. The sculpture behind the fireplace is by Frank Stella.

*Top:* Large doors open across the front of the house onto a deck overlooking the beach. The upper deck is cantilevered off the house so supporting pillars are not required.

*Above:* The entertainment area has a bar and seating looking out to the beach. The artwork is by Andy Warhol.

*Left:* Teak veneer paneling in the kitchen complements wood finishes in the house.



*Above:* In the second floor master suite, a teak veneer curtain wall contrasts with the concrete walls.

*Facing page, top:* The upstairs balcony is made from translucent glass so it doesn't block light from the deck and living areas below.

*Facing page, middle:* The bath and shower are positioned by the beachfront wall of the house. Windows make the most of the views.

*Facing page, lower:* The lower level of the main house and garage with the courtyard between, is shown here.

**Architect:** David Lawrence Gray Architects, (Los Angeles)

**Builder:** Forthill Construction

**Interior designer:** Sheri Schlesinger & Associates

**Structural engineer:** Dimitri Verwilt

**Cladding:** Concrete

**Roof:** Lead-coated copper

**Window and door joinery:** Aluminum

**Flooring:** French limestone

**Lighting:** Fire Ltd

**Kitchen manufacturer:** Bulthaup

**Cabinets:** Beech

**Countertops:** Granite

**Backsplash:** Granite

**Sink:** Franke

**Faucets:** Franke

**Stove:** Gaggenau

**Ventilation hood:** Gaggenau

**Refrigerator:** Sub-Zero

**Dishwasher:** Gaggenau

**Bath:** Granite

**Bathroom cabinetry:** Teak

**Bathroom floor:** Granite

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**Photography by** Tim Street-Porter

