

## THE GIVING TREE

CARREN JAO

A bright idea blossomed close to home for Modal Design principal Daniel Monti. Tasked to create a low-maintenance, multi-generational home for his parents, his family, his brother's children and their many pets, Monti looked to a massive century-old stone pine tree with a vast canopy growing right on the property as an endless source of inspiration.

Despite the challenges the tree's location presented, Monti never considered removing it from its native Venice, California, location. "The pine tree is such a special piece of the lot that you can't help but fall in love with it," says Monti. Instead, he worked around it to create a three-bedroom 2,700 square foot home that echoes the same comfort and beauty as the sight of that majestic age-old tree. "The tree is really the inspiration for the whole house."

Here's a look:



Wrapped in a folded Cor-ten steel curtain, the Walnut Residence's unforgettable exterior creates even more surprises indoors. Architect Daniel Monti adds that much of the programming had to be pushed towards the front of the home to make room for the large canopy of the century old pine tree on the lot.



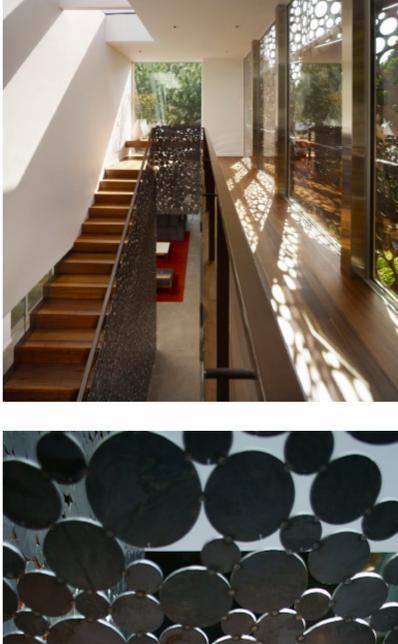
Before Monti's family bought the property, it was in the sorriest of states. It was home to a rundown 1920s dwelling piled high with trash and on its last legs. "we walked in for a minute and had to walk back out to get a breath of air then walk back in. It was really thick and moldy- really bad," says Monti of walking through the original home.



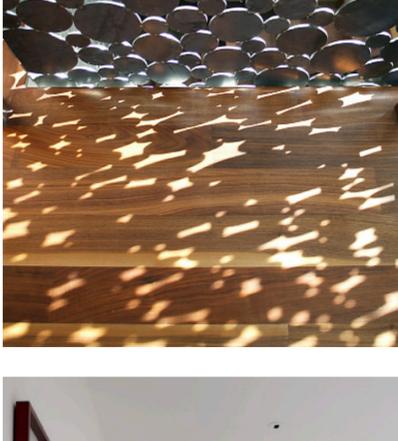
The Cor-ten steel curtain punched with holes keeps the home's sense of privacy while allowing copious amounts of light to shine through to the interior.



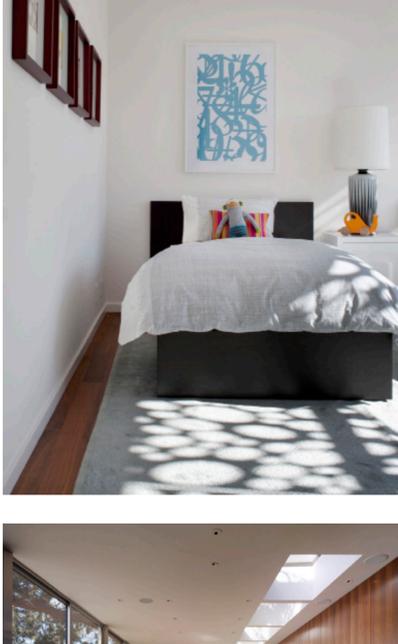
Showcasing his mastery of light, Monti designed these Cor-ten curtains to modulate the light that enters the home, creating a dappled effect all throughout the house. "Light is such a great resource in California and architects tend to lose that when they look into a space," says Monti.



In stark contrast to Monti's 1920 home now being rented out, the Walnut Residence never seems to run out of natural light. "After six months of living here, my wife and I noticed that we never turn on the light," remarked Monti. "I never have to turn on the light- ever."



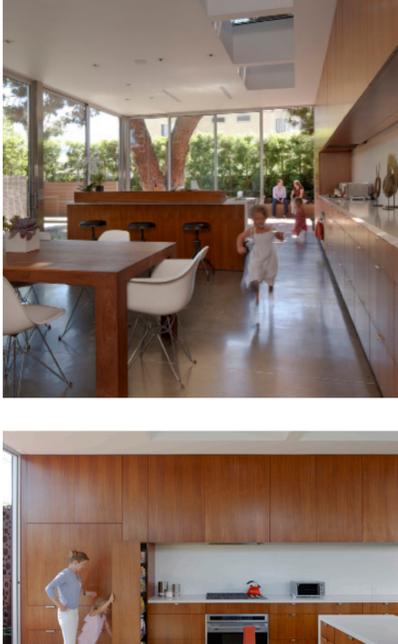
Not one to waste any resources, Monti also repurposed the circular cut outs into a staircase balustrade that adds an artistic element to the home.



The quality of light changes all throughout the year. During the winter, the shadows created by the circles climb up the entire wall of a room; during the summer, they only reach up to the floor. The panels also have a cooling effect, shading the rooms from the sun's hot rays.



When choosing material and furniture, Monti's guiding principle always centered on his family. On the first floor, Monti designed an open plan that flows from living to kitchen to outdoors in one linear motion. Concrete (i.e. easy to clean up) floors, dark-colored furniture and large open spaces negate any need for delicate care, instantly putting everyone at ease.



The Walnut Residence is equipped to handle Monti's tight-knit extended family. His parents- who often come to town every month or so- their grandchildren and Monti and his wife. when everyone gets together, it becomes a madhouse, but the home is built to handle it.

"The house plays two sides," says Monti, "It becoms very formal, clean and cocktail party-ish, but at the same time when the grandchildren and my parents are in town, it's toys everywhere and kids having fun, yelling at the top of their lungs."



Monti catered to his mother's love of cooking by giving her ample storage areas along the 70-foot long walnut wall-slash-cabinet. The refrigerator, kitchen items and other goods easily disappear into the wall when not in use. The nonporous, stain, scratch, and heat resistant Caesarstone countertops also make for easy clean-ups after cooking a feast.



When designing his father's office, Monti made sure his dad had a serene space for getting work done while getting a front-row seat to all the action. The office offers generous views of the backyard and all the antics the Monti family are up to in the yard, pool or Jacuzzi.



Monti used Trex, made from recycled plastic and waste wood, on the deck outside. The deck is weather-resistant and will never need painting or staining.

Finally, the stone pine tree reveals itself from the backyard looking over the Venice neighborhood. Its canopy stretches over the first floor of the home and can be glimpsed by the skylights placed strategically above the living area.