

The Modern Man

YOU DON'T GO FROM SELLING LOW-INCOME HOUSING TO DESIGNING MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR HOMES IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS WITHOUT A LITTLE TALENT. HERE'S HOW STEVE HERMANN DID JUST THAT.

By Colleen Ringer



AFTER GETTING HIS DEGREE in international relations and living in such global hot spots as Paris, Tokyo and Madrid, Steve Hermann decided it was time to settle down. Los Angeles, he resolved, would be the place to put down roots (partly because he had grown up only an hour away in Riverside, Calif.). Here, in the City of Angels, he began selling low-income housing. “I started realizing that the houses I was selling were really awful,” says the architectural designer, who is also a real estate agent. “So, I started buying some of them, fixing them up and selling them.” Although Hermann wasn’t completely satisfied with this system, it did allow him to buy his own abode in the Hollywood Hills. “I did a full renovation of it, and everyone kept saying it was gorgeous and that I should be doing this for a living,” he says. “So I said, ‘Let’s give it a try.’”

And try he did, using the same concept as before, just in a different location—the Hollywood Hills. Then eight years ago, or about six or seven renovations in, he decided to sell the home he was currently living in, one he had renovated himself. “Every time an agent would come to show the house, I’d see a familiar face—faces you see on the television every day,” he recalls. “It was surreal.” The dwelling eventually struck a chord so strong with pop singer Christina Aguilera that she bought it—and the furnishings and artwork within it. She still lives there today.

“When I build a home, I want people to walk in and be excited,” Hermann says. “I want them to feel different about themselves.” As a result of this philosophy, his modern and mid-century modern design styles have not only enchanted Aguilera, they’ve also wowed Jennifer Lopez, Ellen DeGeneres





STEVE HERMANN *on...*

IF HE HAD TO BE A PIECE OF FURNITURE...

Could I be a car instead?! I would be the Mercedes Gullwing. It is innovative, forward thinking and has styling that can still bring a grown man to tears!

FAVORITE ROOM IN HIS HOME

It's a tie between the living room and the master bedroom. Both overlook the entire city; and when you're in either room, it feels like you're on a jet flying over the city.

BIGGEST DESIGN FAUX PAS HE'S EVER MADE

Using 12 by 12 multicolor slate in bathrooms. It's never a good idea to use something very popular because it means it will soon be very unpopular.

IF HE COULD LIVE IN ANY CITY IN THE WORLD...

Los Angeles for the residential architecture, New York for its energy, and Paris for its desserts!

BEST THING ABOUT WORKING WITH CELEBRITIES

They have the money to get the very best.

HARDEST THING ABOUT WORKING WITH CELEBS

Needing to deal with their business managers.

HIS FUTURE

I'm looking to do my own hotel in L.A.





and power couple, Courtney Cox and David Arquette. His current projects—one in Montecito, the other in Palm Springs—will no doubt do the same.

Made of 95 percent glass, the Montecito home will allow Hermann to do something he loves, which is to push the envelope. “When I walk into one of [my contemporaries’] homes, I realize the bar has been raised, and I need to take my designs forward a notch,” he says. “[The house in Montecito] almost looks like a spaceship has landed in the middle of this really old oak grove.” Inside, the roof will appear to be floating above the glass walls, as the structural components will be completely out of sight.

Los Angeles, it turns out, is one of the best places Hermann could have chosen to set up shop given his preferred architectural styles. “L.A. was a pioneering city for mid-century modernism,” he says. “You can see a purity of line and form that moves you. [The architects of that era] captured a certain style and essence of a time when America was extremely hopeful and forward thinking.”

It’s not only the architecture of the 50’s and 60’s that speaks to Hermann, it’s the cars, too, and the furniture—both of which he collects. “Often things that move me are rooted in the past with an eye to the future,” he says, adding that the optimism of the era is infectious. Perhaps it’s that infectious optimism, reflected back in his designs, that brings some of Hollywood’s brightest stars to Hermann’s doorstep. **EW**

about Steve Hermann

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