

# Mountain Song

A San Diego architect creates a bold, energy-efficient complement to the Western landscape.



Solar panels are affixed to the garage roof, which is angled to maximize exposure (left). A custom rain-gutter system collects even slight amounts of precipitation in an underground cistern and distributes it to the yard. The Cor-Ten pivoting window is by Brian Linn of Vincent Designs (below).

**From the floor of Pauma Valley, in** northern San Diego County, the 6,142-foot peak of Palomar Mountain is a dominating presence. It virtually pours into one of the valley's newest homes, where a floor-to-ceiling wall of sliding glass doors and a roofline pitched skyward heighten the visual impact. Designed by San Diego-based StudioAnderson, this 1,800-square-foot two-bedroom residence is really a mountain theater.

"I wanted the slope of the roof to go right up to the top of the mountain, so that as soon as you walk in, the mountain is a presence in the house," says architect Aaron Anderson.

Owners Ron Krohn and Marjorie Koza moved here from New Mexico after scouring the West for a place to retire. They had

two main requirements: a golf course where she could play and an airstrip where he could land his small plane. Surrounded by agricultural land and Native American reservations, Pauma Valley was once home to a ranch owned by the actor John Wayne and is now a community of mostly Spanish-style and ranch homes from the mid 20th century. Diverging from the neighborhood's norms, Anderson's modernist design for the rectangular single-level home has a tilted roofline and a dramatically trapezoidal corrugated metal garage, evoking the wing of an airplane and a hangar. The landscape's color palette of grays, browns, and beiges directly inspired the home and its outdoor spaces.

Anderson, a native of the valley, was particularly drawn to the area's live oak >





“To me, all the Mission-style houses here are the ones that are out of place.” Aaron Anderson, architect

trees; their smoky gray trunks translated into the metal cladding of the roof and garage, the home’s smooth stucco cladding, and the patch of dark gravel next to the property’s hilly driveway.

Dividing the terrain from the home is a

gabion wall of Cor-Ten steel and welded wire mesh fencing, packed with river stones. The barrier is low enough to allow mountain views, but high enough to block out the street and neighboring houses.

From this patio, the yard slopes down, first

slowly and then quite sharply.

Landscape designer Marilyn Guidroz used decomposed granite as the primary ground cover for the property, accented with a couple dozen large boulders. The planting is mostly made up of drought-tolerant native grasses and shrubs like buckwheat, as well as low-water non-native flowering species like winter-blooming rosemary, honeysuckle, and jasmine. Because the owners are beekeepers, Guidroz curated the plantings so that there’d be something in bloom all year. A custom gutter system on the sloped roof directs rainwater to a cistern, then to a network of pipes and a leach line buried in the yard for irrigation.

Solar panels provide enough power for the residents to sell energy back to the grid, and the home’s double-insulated steel frame construction reduces the need for heating and cooling. Hopper windows in the great room help circulate air, as does the custom steel-frame window in the guest room.

Ron and Marjorie requested a relatively small house, so the interior is pragmatic, though there’s ample space for the great room and kitchen. But the essence of the home is its relationship with the surrounding landscape. “The house is all about connecting to the site,” Anderson says. “The important things are already there.” ■

The architecture firm tackled the hardscape: patios, pathways, and gabion walls. Landscape designer Marilyn Guidroz worked with existing native plants on the site and added more species to ensure there would be blooms year-round for the bees kept by resident Ron Krohn (above). The gabions (right) hold smooth rocks from the nearby San Luis Rey River; a fireplace feature is flanked by benches.

