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A tale of architecture



VICKY SANDERSON
AROUND
THE HOUSE

At just 1,700 square feet, Matthew Rosenberg's home may be one of the more modestly-sized properties in the affluent Hollywood Hills neighborhood. But as with many small treasures, its restrained beauty shines through.

The one-storey structure, built in 1961, fits over a lower deck and then terraces down the mountain. Below, there's a 2,500 square foot patio — almost twice the interior footprint — that includes a swimming pool and sauna.

An upper deck has more or less been turned over to Peregrine falcons, while owls, peacocks, leopards, coyotes live in the surrounding area, and birds of all kinds bathe in the pool.

Rosenberg, who launched M-Rad www.m-rad.com in 2013 as an architecture, design, branding, and development studio, finds meaning in living near "extreme nature."

"It's almost like being in a forest. The more I see it, the more I realize that it's their land, and that we are just living among it," he says.

The house is drawn with

clean mid-century lines. There are lots of windows, and interiors are dressed in light-bouncing whites paired with wood and leather browns, sometimes in Rosenberg's own custom works, and very occasional, very precise notes of colour. Texture comes through in rugs and pillows with Scandinavian influences, and is echoed in expanses of veined stone.

Walls are mostly undressed, but maybe because the view's the thing. Because he uses the house to host both work and family events, spaces are open and flexible, a design he says encourages people to connect, relax, and drop their guards. "I think ultimately interesting partnerships and relationships arise from that," he says.

Rosenberg's route to this home, in this place, was long and varied. There were stints at McGill and Dalhousie Universities, as well as the Southern California Institute of Architecture, along with study



Rosenberg's firm is developing a line of hotels — from architecture, design, and interior to branded fragrances, furniture, and product.

periods in Paris and a gig in Beijing, where he worked for MAD, the firm known to Canadian architecture lovers for designing the marvelous, shape-shifting "Marilyn Towers" in Mississauga.

His architectural ethos really began to take shape at the University of Saskatchewan, where Rosenberg studied fine arts, painting and photography and where, he says, he started seeing "space as an experience."

"It's what I always go back to. How you get someone to lift their head, to see differently, to

feel differently. Architecture has the potential to change the way people experience things."

Walking the streets of Paris for several weeks during a study period cemented that conviction, says Rosenberg. "It's a pretty amazing place to be to really understand the history of architecture. It's hard to explain how it affects your architectural career. But it for sure did."

Because sustainability is a driving principle for Rosenberg, his Hollywood home's water supply is solar heated, solar tubes light the space, and windows let in natural lights and direct flow of air to cool the house. Those details, he insists, should be the norm.

"Sustainability should be inherent in every practice. It's fundamental for me, but only in the way it should be for all designers and architects," says Rosenberg.

Materials, he adds, have to be considered in terms of lifespan, what went into making them, and how long they take to decompose. "I don't think there is a stringent enough checklist on that yet," he says. "And too many products make it to market with an eco-logo but then get pulled because turn out not to be."

Other notable works by Rosenberg include Philadelphia's Fitler Club www.fitlerclub.com, a very handsome private social club with 14 overnight rooms. It seems the polar opposite of his sparse designs for luxury overnight accommodations in Yosemite Park.

Rosenberg is happy that I have to ask what ties them together.

"I work very hard to avoid a sense of design ethos or a lineage of a type of design," he says. "Our work always starts with solving a problem, and each project really becomes its own thing."

Vicky Sanderson is the editor of Around the House, www.aroundthehouse.ca.

Check her out on Instagram @athwithvicky, on Twitter @ATHwithVicky and on facebook.com/ATHwithVicky



Rosenberg's firm is also finishing a 62,000-square-foot headquarters of security brand Ring in Hawthorne, California.