

# LA

Los Angeles Times Magazine



EMILIA CLARKE *IGNITES* GAME OF THRONES  
*DESIGN, NATURALLY: INTERIORS, ARCHITECTURE, CARS*

MAY 06, 2012

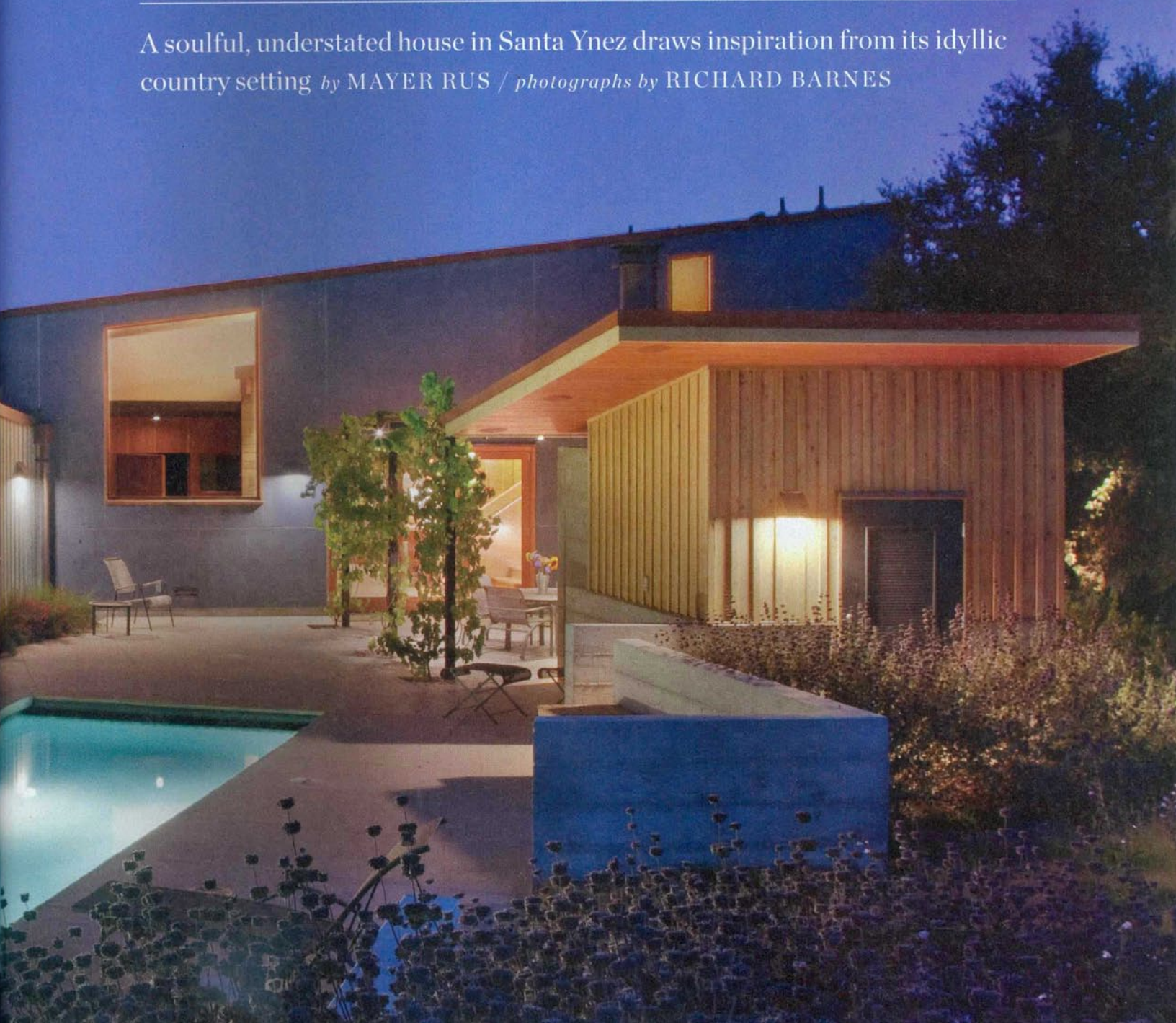
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# VIEW FINDER

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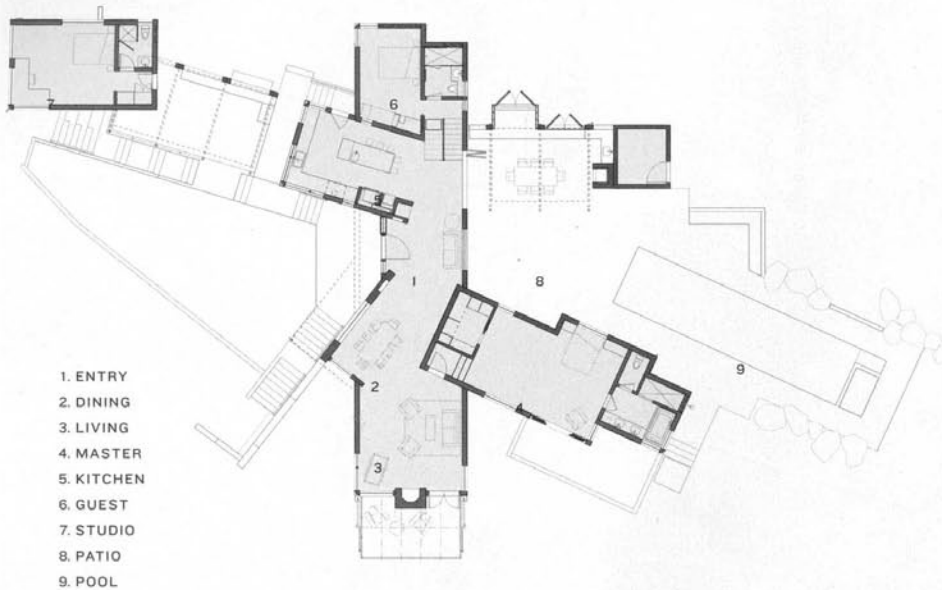
A soulful, understated house in Santa Ynez draws inspiration from its idyllic country setting *by* MAYER RUS / *photographs by* RICHARD BARNES







This page and opposite: Clad in deep blue stucco, the “dominant wedge” of the house contains the entry, dining and living areas. An outdoor room joins the main house to a small art studio. Materials include board-form concrete and stained-wood siding.



1. ENTRY
2. DINING
3. LIVING
4. MASTER
5. KITCHEN
6. GUEST
7. STUDIO
8. PATIO
9. POOL

Every architecture student is familiar with Frank Lloyd Wright’s oft-quoted pronouncement concerning the siting of buildings: “No house should ever be on a hill or on anything. It should be of the hill. Belonging to it. Hill and house should live together, each the happier for the other.” That entreaty for the sensitive integration of architecture and landscape, from his 1932 autobiography, still rings true, particularly in this age of environmental activism. But what are homeowners to do when the most spectacular views from their property radiate predictably from the top of their own hill? The answer: Tread lightly.

Ten years ago, real-estate investor Rick Sanders and his wife, artist Ro Snell Sanders, purchased a 20-acre parcel for a second home in Santa Ynez. They were committed to building a contemporary house, but the couple had no desire to live in a pristine Miesian box of glass and steel that would alight on the terrain like a spaceship.

“We wanted a place where we could appreciate the land without disturbing it. Light and views were most important to us, but we certainly didn’t want the house to stick out in this rural setting,” says Ro.







A large window opposite the front door keeps the emphasis on pastoral views; painting by Sam Erenberg. The Kaare Klint sofa is from J.F. Chen, Carl Auböck table from Blackman Cruz.







The bedroom wing juts into the living/dining sweep; painting by Enrique Martinez Celaya. Dining table is from J.F. Chen; dining and lounge chairs, Giò Ponti rocker and Stilnovo floor lamp from Eccola; sofa and hexagonal tables from Reform; carpet by the Rug Company.



“Nothing too precious or fussy,” adds Rick. “We wanted to build a quiet retreat with the comforts of a cottage but in a more modern language.”

They found sympathetic collaborators in architects Richard Fernau and Laura Hartman, principals of the Berkeley-based firm Fernau & Hartman, and L.A. landscape architect Pamela Burton. In a project marked by unusual harmony and cross-fertilization of ideas, the clients and their designers worked toward a common goal of brokering a détente between dueling imperatives: Create a home with considerable character and presence, yet have it appear unassuming when viewed from afar.

The Fernau & Hartman team—which eventually included designers Jenee Anzelone and Laura Boutelle—began with extensive site visits, allowing them to track the movement of the sun and frame specific views of the Santa Ynez Valley from the ridgeline of the property. The next order of business was to develop a strategy of architectural camouflage predicated on massing, materials and color.

“Ro had grown up on an old farm in England, and we had lots of conversations about the look and feel





The modest materials palette in the stairwell includes boards made from sunflower-seed hulls; silkscreen by Josef Albers. Windows in the kitchen and the master suite frame specific views; drawings by Sandra Blow and Sophie Grant; carpet by the Rug Company.



of those kinds of buildings—particularly how they evolved over time with rooms and materials added on to the original structure,” says Fernau. “The idea of breaking this house into modestly scaled volumes that step down the ridge allowed us to make the most of the site without overwhelming it.”

The structure’s primary volume—or “dominant wedge,” as Fernau calls it—contains the entry, dining area and living room. The kitchen and master suite are treated as semi-independent pavilions that penetrate the main space at angles dictated by the disposition of views and the influx of natural light at various times of the day. The palette of unpretentious materials includes polished concrete floors, rough board-form concrete walls, spaced Douglas fir board ceilings and a variety of wood siding treatments in both horizontal and vertical applications. Along with the zigzagging architectural volumes, the overlapping grids lend a fascinating rhythm to the progression of spaces throughout the house.

“The use of color was essential to forging a bond between house and land. We’d all collect stones from around the property and pull out these deep ambers,





The pool is sited to showcase the sweeping views. Burton's plantings, including swaths of sweet lavender, blur the boundaries between wild and cultivated. Grapevines climb the trellis of the pool dining area, where the Salterini dining table and chairs are from J.F. Chen.

reds, ochres and serpentine greens. The main part of the house is clad in a deep blue stucco that echoes the color of the hills in certain light. We clad other architectural volumes in wood stained in different colors," Fernau says.

Burton's plan for the grounds was similarly calculated to cradle the house nimbly in its pastoral setting. Working around the property's longstanding heritage oaks, she devised a series of outdoor rooms, gardens and native-grass fields that balance intimacy and enclosure with luxurious sweeps of land. The magic lies in the seemingly effortless fusion of cultivated and uncultivated, as if the existing terrain naturally embraced the new arrivals. "On some level, it doesn't look like I did anything—and that takes a tremendous amount of work," she says. "This was an intensely collaborative project. The landscape plays off the architecture, and all of it together reflects Rick and Ro's respect for the land."

Indeed, everything about this place boils down to respect for the land, which brings to mind another apropos quote from Mr. Wright: "Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you." ♦



MARION BRENNER