

guest appearance

text: edie cohen

When a Los Angeles couple has visitors, they stay
in a showstopping pavilion by Aleks Istanbulu





No doubt that this pair of green-striped cubes is a folly. With a double-height library cum living room, a galley kitchen, and a bedroom suite, however, this guest house on a hilltop in Beverly Hills's Coldwater Canyon could easily be a full-fledged residence. Aleks Istanbulu made sure to build and detail Lago Vista, as the guest house is called, every bit as carefully as the larger residences he's designed in and around Los Angeles.

Owners Paul and Dorrie Markovits, a commercial-property investor and a graphic designer, provided only one lead: that the guest house should "encourage contemplation," Istanbulu explains. Otherwise he was on his own, free to tap into theoretical concerns without necessarily referring—or deferring—to the 1950's stucco ranch already occupying the 1½-acre site. "I understand contemporary houses. I respect the materials of our time," he says. "But I also respect the history of making warm, cozy places based on proportion and progression." (His own home is a 130-year-old converted church, a Santa Monica landmark.) He attributes this thinking to a synthesis of his Turkish roots, Swiss boarding school, and Illinois Institute of Technology architectural ➤

Previous spread, left: Granite stepping stones cross the water-filled steel basin in front of the entry to a Los Angeles guest house by Aleks Istanbulu Architects. Photography: David Lena.

Previous spread, right: The library has an entire 16-foot-square wall of painted pine bookshelves, served by a painted wooden rolling ladder. Photography: David Lena.

Opposite: The custom front door, veneered in wengé-stained oak, pivots open to an interior with an acid-washed concrete floor. Photography: Tim Street-Porter.

Top, from left: A stepped connector between the two volumes allows for an 18-inch difference in floor level. Wengé veneer, quartz composite, and resin define the kitchen. **Bottom:** The library's glazed cutaway corner is framed in aluminum. Photography: David Lena.



Opposite: In the library's sitting area, velour-upholstered cushions line the banquette. A table topped in lacquered oak anchors the wool rug. Photography: Tim Street-Porter.

Top, from left: A steel pipe feeds a lily pond; photography: Tim Street-Porter. Maurizio Manzoni and Roberto Tapinassi's chair is paired with a stainless-steel footrest in the library; photography: David Lena. **Bottom, from left:** Wool rugs soften the connector's steps. The library has a view of Coldwater Canyon. Photography: Tim Street-Porter.



education, followed by stints at the Art Institute of Chicago and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.

Nature, too, figured into the equation. Aleks Istanbullu Architects sited the 880-square-foot guest house so that it would nestle into the hillside and profit from the views. Obviously, the first question is: Why two joined boxes instead of one? "I initially looked at a single box with a mezzanine," Istanbullu acknowledges. "But it was too big, too clunky." The two-box solution responds to the division of function areas while sitting more gently on the land.

Four granite stepping stones lead you over a water-filled basin to the entry, which establishes a solid-void relationship via a wengé-stained door set in the center of a clear glass wall. You're now in the smaller volume, a low rectangle. At the front is the kitchen, rich and colorful with wengé veneer on cabinetry and a lime-green resin backsplash. From here, the concrete-slab floor flows back, through the bedroom and bathroom. To get to the second volume,

you walk through a short glassed-in connector. "It's like stepping outside again before crossing a threshold into a space two times as tall," Istanbullu says. Indeed, it's a perfect cube 16 feet square.

At first, Paul Markovits's sole request for the single large room was a desk. What he got was a library with not just any desk but an iron one by Jean Nouvel, plus an entire wall of white-painted bookshelves, other cabinetry in wengé veneer, a banquette upholstered in sage-green velour, a C-shape leather-covered chair with a stainless footrest, and a rug the color of green tea. The dark cabinetry is interrupted by glass at a cutaway corner, a framing device for the city and canyon panorama as well as the downward-sloping garden directly below. The glass floor all but insures that most people, leery of stepping onto the clear surface, will hang back on the concrete slabs. It's here, not with nose pressed against the glass, that the best viewing occurs. As another framing gesture, Istanbullu





painted the underside of the eaves in green.

Naturally, the exterior's vertical green stripes make the biggest statement, with both a playful street presence and a respect for nature. Dorrie Markovits determined the final palette, and Istanbulu refined the composition by canting the joints between the cement-fiber panels. "It softens the facade and makes it seem more natural," Istanbulu adds, "like blades of grass moving in the wind." 🌿

PROJECT TEAM

JOHN HEGLIN (PROJECT ARCHITECT); SANJIV BAJAJ; JOSEPH TRAN; ALEKS ISTANBULLU ARCHITECTS. GORDON L. POLON CONSULTING ENGINEERS: STRUCTURAL ENGINEER. BECKER & MIYAMOTO: CIVIL ENGINEER. HINERFELD-WARD: MEP, GENERAL CONTRACTOR. IMAGINE WOODWORKS: WOODWORK.

PRODUCT SOURCES

FROM FRONT BOURGET BROS.: STEPPING STONES (EXTERIOR). CERTAINTEED: CUSTOM PANELS. BEHR: PAINT. ALACO LADDER COMPANY: LADDER (LIBRARY). **DETAILS:** DOOR HARDWARE (ENTRY). CAESARSTONE: COUNTER MATERIAL (KITCHEN). BLANCO: SINK. KWC: SINK FITTINGS. GAGGENAU: COOKTOP. LBL **LIGHTING:** PENDANT FIXTURES (KITCHEN, BEDROOM). 3FORM: BACKSPLASH MATERIAL (KITCHEN). PANEL MATERIAL (BEDROOM). DAO: CUSTOM BANQUETTE CUSHIONS (LIBRARY). MITCHELL GOLD + BOB WILLIAMS: BACK CUSHION FABRIC. THROUGH MCCREARY MODERN: SEAT CUSHION FABRIC, BODY FABRIC. LE KLINT: PENDANT FIXTURE. ROCHE-BOBOIS: CHAIR. GUS DESIGN GROUP: FOOTREST. MAT INTL: RUG. JESSE: TABLE (LIBRARY), DRESSER (BEDROOM). CRATE AND BARREL: RUGS (CONNECTOR). THROUGH DESIGN WITHIN REACH: BED (BEDROOM). BOOM DESIGN: MIRROR, CHAIR. **THROUGHOUT** LITON LIGHTING: RECESSED CEILING FIXTURES. DANDY GLASS: CUSTOM WINDOWS. PPG INDUSTRIES: GLASS. ICI PAINTS: PAINT.



Top, from left: Plants known as mother-in-law's tongue grow in the trough between the two volumes. A painted steel trellis serves as a carport. **Bottom:** In the bedroom, an oak dresser sits next to a lacquered fiberglass chair. Photography: Tim Street-Porter.

Opposite: The cement-fiber cladding was painted different shades of green. Photography: David Lena.

