



# SCENE STEALER

FILMMAKER MICHAEL BAY'S LATEST HIT IS A CINEMATIC  
LOS ANGELES HOME WHERE MACHO MINIMALISM  
MEETS HIGH-OCTANE ARCHITECTURAL DRAMA

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Director Michael Bay commissioned this stunning three-story Los Angeles residence, which was originally conceived by architect Chad Oppenheim and realized by the architecture firm Rios Clementi Hale Studios and interior designer Lorraine Letendre, with additional work by decorator Lynda Murray; the poolside chaise longues are by RH. For details see Sources.

Bay is flanked by his English mastiffs, Rebel (left) and Bonecrusher, in the entry. **Opposite, from top:** A mirrored Anish Kapoor sculpture animates the living room's blackened-steel fireplace surround; the seating is by Molteni & C, the Jim Zivic side table is from Ralph Pucci International, and the rug is by Mansour Modern. Vintage armchairs designed by Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret are grouped in the living room.



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eats of architectural derring-do have long had their place in the hills and canyons of Los Angeles, where gravity-defying midcentury landmarks such as John Lautner's Sheats-Goldstein residence and Pierre Koenig's Stahl House test the structural and aesthetic limits of cliffside living. New to that esteemed lineage is the recently completed home of Michael Bay, a filmmaker known for action-packed big-budget blockbusters like the *Transformers* series, *Armageddon*, and *Pearl Harbor*. From such a maestro of spectacular effects one might expect a place with more than just a hint of drama. It does not disappoint.

"Everyone involved in the project said this was the toughest thing they've ever built," says Bay, who likens the four-year process to the production of an epic movie, with himself, naturally, in the director's chair. Given the extraordinary team he assembled—a cast of thousands, as it were, fit for a Cecil B. DeMille showstopper—the metaphor is perfectly apt.

Miami architect Chad Oppenheim came up with the original concept for the 30,000-square-foot, three-story dwelling, modeling its sculptural massing





A sparkling infinity pool borders the home's main level; the outdoor furniture is by James Perse. **Opposite, from top:** A window wall in the lower-level lounge can be raised, merging the space with the outdoors; the slipcovered sectional sofa and armchairs are by James Perse, the accent pillows are by RH, and the cocktail table is from Axel Vervoordt. A sculptural brise-soleil shades the living room's library area, where a Lianne Gold light fixture is suspended above a table by Robert Bristow and Pilar Proffitt (both pieces are from Ralph Pucci International); the chairs are vintage Pierre Jeanneret.





Designer Lynda Murray collaborated with Jeff Cooper Architects on the home theater, whose dome is embedded with LED lights. **Above:** In the family room, walnut shelving displays a collection of vintage photographs; the sectional sofa is by Giorgetti from DDC, the vintage Arne Jacobsen swivel chair is from JF Chen, and the rug is by Mansour Modern.



Parked in the garage are (from left) a 2013 Lamborghini Aventador, a 2010 Ferrari 458, and a 1967 Chevrolet Camaro, all of which made cameos in Bay's *Transformers* Camaro series. **Above, from left:** The kitchen is outfitted with Boffi cabinetry and countertops and a Wolf wall oven and cooktop; the stools are by Matteograssi. A glass-enclosed wine closet further distinguishes the kitchen.

of rectilinear forms and astonishing cantilevers after an unrealized proposal he had for a group of Caribbean villas. “I wanted the house to have the feel of a resort,” recalls Bay, who is based in Miami but uses the residence for parties and relaxation during trips to L.A. “I looked at the first sketch Chad showed me and said, ‘That’s the house I want!’” Architect Mark Rios of the L.A. firm Rios Clementi Hale Studios, in turn, translated that vision into nuts-and-bolts reality, collaborating closely with decorator Lorraine Letendre, who created the main living and bedroom spaces. Designer Lynda Murray, meanwhile, tackled the spa, gym, and lower-level guest quarters. Add to this formidable roster of talent a battalion of contractors, engineers, artisans, and consultants, and one begins to fully grasp the ambition of the undertaking.

Due to the architecture’s complexity and the challenges of the steep, nearly eight-acre lot—not to mention Bay’s Hollywood-honed inclination to analyze every aspect of an experience—the director enlisted the help of a gaming software company to create an advanced digital model. So prior to

construction Bay was able to explore sight lines, light conditions, and space progressions in the same way that players navigate the labyrinthine worlds of video games. “When it comes to this kind of technology, architects are working in the Dark Ages,” he says.

Considering its size, the house makes a relatively discreet impression from the street, with much of the structure’s bulk carved into the hillside and concealed from view. Once encountered straight on, however, the scheme is a tour de force of architectural acrobatics, its breathtaking overhangs and column-free spans engendering a palpable sense of weightlessness. This quality is perhaps most eloquently expressed in the two independent volumes balanced atop the house’s main level—one a bedroom suite for Bay, the other for VIP guests.

“There’s a give-and-take between embracing the terrain and defying its difficulties,” Bay notes. “Ultimately I think the architecture makes a respectful accommodation.”

Even off the clock the director clearly appreciates the power of suspense, which builds as visitors





***Clockwise from above:*** The gym affords sweeping views of the surrounding terrain. Planks of hemlock line the sauna; the towels are by Frette. A guest room is furnished with a B&B Italia bed and chaise longues, the former dressed with Matteo linens and a Calvin Klein Home blanket; the photographs are by Bae Bien-U, and the bedside lamp is a Stefan Gulassa design from Holly Hunt.



Occupying a discrete volume atop the house's main level, the master suite opens onto a rooftop terrace and the entry's massive skylight. The James Perse chair and ottoman are upholstered in a Sunbrella fabric.



descend a driveway to a meticulously landscaped forecourt and then cross a broad reflecting pool to arrive at the front door. The capacious entry, crowned by a louvered skylight, introduces the structure's striking scale and luminosity, but the coup de théâtre—a jaw-dropping panorama of the canyon below and the sprawling metropolis beyond—is disclosed upon walking around the blackened-steel walls that delineate the central staircase. When those dazzling views open up, the architecture recedes into the background, acting as a frame for the cityscape.

Within the expansive interiors, Letendre took a decidedly restrained, minimalist approach

to the decor, mixing vintage designs by the likes of Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret with bespoke creations such as the dining room's steel table and the master bath's Italian-made travertine tub. Complementing those pieces is a tightly curated array of art, from the Anish Kapoor mirrored wall sculpture in the living room to the centuries-old sandstone Buddha head overlooking Bay's bed. "The house is not about small gestures but about the quality of the spaces and views," Letendre explains. "Michael doesn't need a lot of visual noise." That said, there is no shortage of sybaritic delights and high-tech thrills. Take the lower level's lounge,



where a massive window wall opens by way of an elaborate system of counterweights, merging the room with the landscape. Then there's the spa, which Murray outfitted with a hemlock-lined sauna, a steam room sheathed in basalt, and a mosaic-tiled "igloo" that delivers a snowy mist for a bracing post-*schvitz* cooldown. (Bay came across a similar setup at the Canyon Ranch resort in Miami Beach and simply had to have one.)

The lower level also contains a state-of-the-art home theater designed by Murray and architect Jeff Cooper, the acoustics of which are so exceptional that even Steven Spielberg was wowed upon visiting

it. And just outside the theater is what could be called the prop museum, a gathering space tricked out with assorted memorabilia from Bay's films—most notably the vintage Camaro that serves as a guise for the character Bumblebee in the *Transformers* series. "He paid for the house, so he gets pride of place," the director quips.

For all its palatial grandeur and whizbang gadgetry, the house still has a comfortable, gracious ambience, a mood one might describe as virile Zen. "I wasn't just going for spectacle," Bay says. "I wanted it to be a total, immersive experience that transports you to another world—my world." □



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A Michel Mouffe painting and a Thai Buddha head surmount the master suite's bespoke walnut platform bed and integrated headboard; the blanket is by Calvin Klein Home, the Alison Berger lamps are from Holly Hunt, the sofa is by Flexform, and the rug is by Mansour Modern. **Right, from top:** An Hervé Van der Straeten lantern from Ralph Pucci International hangs in Bay's dressing room. The master bath's walls, floor tile, tub, sinks, and vanity are crafted from Italian travertine; the showerhead is by Dornbracht.

