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MY FAVORITE ROOM

A luxury 'home within a home'

BY NEAL J. LEITEREG

Michael Rachlin has designed some pretty impressive venues. He's the architect behind the renovation of Los Angeles City Hall. He designed space for the 1984 Olympic Games. But one of his favorite rooms? The master bedroom at a recent project: an oceanfront contemporary in Malibu listed at \$15 million. Check out the jaw-dropping view and you'll understand why.

Why is this your favorite room?

It's a bright, romantic, high-volume space on the third floor of the house with great views, a spiral staircase leading to a mezzanine that serves as an en suite office space, and a large exterior deck for relaxing in the sun and enjoying the cool ocean breeze. I see it as a home within a home.

Describe your design process for the home.

The house's hillside site was a driving factor in the design. We took advantage of the steep slope to step the various levels of the house downward, like a series of treads in a stairway. We maximized views of the ocean from every level and room, especially the master bedroom suite.

You designed this home in the early 1990s. What has changed about people's tastes?

I think what people are looking for today is largely an outgrowth of trends that began in the 1990s. White kitchens, Zen-like spaces, a minimalist aesthetic and the use of light woods are just a few examples. People are looking to kitchens as the heart of the home. We're seeing a greater focus on quality features like Italian cabinetry and state-of-the-art stainless-steel



THE MASTER bedroom suite in this Broad Beach home in Malibu that is offered at \$15 million is a "bright, romantic" space.



Michael Rachlin

appliances in spaces designed for both cooking and social gatherings. In bathrooms, there's a desire to create a private home spa. Features like steam showers,

heated floors and Jacuzzi tubs help create a comfortable and luxurious experience.

How would you compare your approach to designing a residential home to a commercial space or landmark?

Design is a process that follows the same general steps regardless of the project type. The difference ... is largely one of scale. Homes are designed to the specific and personal needs of a homeowner or family, which are often very artis-

tic and, as a result, more demanding than other kinds of projects. Commercial or institutional projects demand consideration of many more user groups such as stakeholders, boards and community groups. Designing for each kind of project entails communicating with clients in a way that builds trust and nurtures a genuine partnership.

What were some of your biggest inspirations?

I find inspiration in a variety of places: art, nature or films with distinctive architectural productions like Peter Weir's "The Truman Show," which featured the master-planned community of Seaside in the Florida Panhandle. I particularly like to discover details that have been hidden or obscured. If you had seen my office building when it was a shoe polish factory, you would have seen a

heavily industrial environment. But beneath the surfaces were beautiful features — the "bones," as I call them — like wooded bow trusses, steel casement windows and brick walls. Looking under the surface led me to restoring the space to its bright, airy, original condition — with a modern sensibility.

What new projects are you currently working on?

We're currently working on a new 350-seat performing arts center at Sage Creek High School for Carlsbad Unified School District. Locally, we were retained by Culver City Unified School District to help implement their bond program. We are working on numerous projects to update the district's campuses and offer students innovative 21st century learning environments.

On the residential side, I re-

cently completed the third renovation of my own house, which was a typically bland 1950s residence that suffered damage from the 1994 Northridge earthquake and was in need of updating. Keeping only the foundation, roof structure and bearing walls, I transformed the house into a home whose style blends the traditional and the modern using a minimalist design language. The house's geometries, generous living spaces and outdoor areas work together to create a modern-day cottage that serves as an oasis in the city.

The home, at 31460 Broad Beach Road in Malibu, is listed with Susan Monus of Coldwell Banker and David Konheim of Hilton & Hyland.

To submit a candidate for My Favorite Room, send a biography and a description of the room to neal.leitereg@latimes.com.

My Favorite Room: Michael Rachlin



The modern-style residence on Malibu's Broad Beach was designed by architect Michael Rachlin and completed in 1991. (Simon Berlyn / Berlyn Photography)



By **Neal J. Leitereg** · Contact Reporter

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