The entrance walk approaches the house diagonally.

Whether the draperies are drawn or open, the house retains its intimate contact with its landscape.

**case study house #20**

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architect

The two-bedroom house on a more or less level site is, naturally, a problem I have solved or endeavored to solve many times. Umbrian artists have painted madonnas over and over again, and Jawlenski, the great friend of Klee and Kandinsky, has, on the same size canvas, composed the same abstracted face many dozens of times with ever refined variation. Deepened conception, penetration carried ever farther into the problem, was more welcome to periods of the past than, it seems, to ours. Earlier, an artist could indulge in the constant study of one subject and its treatment; with no bias against repetitive zest. Art was comfortably relaxing then in peaceful consistent evolution without being haunted by the anxiety that originality may not perpetually be documented. Spring and fall models were not too divergent, blue periods and white periods were not urging each other out under internal or external pressure. The fear to stay too long with one, however refined, idea or approach did not exist.

It is strange that our age should nourish such fear, often in the best design talents, when now, more than ever, we need many two-bedroom dwellings and many such all-purpose chairs as Charles Eames, for instance, has designed for us.

The two-bedroom Case Study House No. 20 is frankly of the typical restrictions of this day as to square footage and realistic budget. It is to serve young parents who find they can afford just that much, although their land is large enough to add later when the evolution of their lives may require it. Even in America—among so many less fortunate postwar countries—thoughtful people accept cheerfully the limita-
Top: Furniture by various modern designers easily fits into the generous space conception of this small house.
Bottom: The prefabricated steel frame provides excellent economy in the use of materials.
tions of a modest self-service house. But smallness may be stretched by skill of space arrangement and by borrowing space from the outdoors in several directions. Opposite the entrance, living quarters open broadly, through a glass front and an aluminum sliding door, to a slate paved terrace, a lawn patio with huge blue gum trees as an impressive backdrop that permits further glimpses to the wide horizon of the sea. This situation was there when the land was selected, but it seems to have taken on new and enriched form while the house was being built to fit it. The best preparation for the important job of managing a project
This house, located at 219 Chautauqua Avenue, Santa Monica Canyon, Los Angeles, is one of a series built by the magazine, Arts and Architecture. It will be open for public inspection beginning January 15, Saturdays and Sundays—2 to 5 P.M.—Tuesdays through Fridays 2 to 4 P.M.—Closed Mondays.

Information on merit specifications will be found on page 8.

INTERIOR FURNISHINGS: FRANK BROS.

Opposite page: First view when a visitor enters living quarters.

Top: Service-yard and car-port in background.

Center: Total view from the northwest.

Bottom: Each of the bedrooms has its hedged patio yet maintains the view through the tall trees to the horizon of the sea.
and for doing it justice by use and maintenance is probably to follow closely its construction, to value every part, and to know the problems of integration. To get a house in one's sleep would hardly be the case in which the owner at once can prove himself a master manager. Yet management and design must be commensurate; they are profoundly interlocked for best results. Design must, in the stages of realization, penetrate the minds of the householders to make the whole a success.

An important feature, which I have contemplated and studied for almost a lifetime, is tested here in execution. Case Study House No. 20 is predicated on a prefabricated utility core, a ready-delivered packaged mechanical unit that contains the centrally massed plumbing and heating installations. By necessity it essentially must affect the floor plan to have the rooms dependent on these installations, the kitchen and the bath, so arranged that they flank this mechanical nucleus. We hope that we have solved this structural problem without hardship in usage.

The kitchen, focus of home work, has been related intimately to a large service-yard which, by planting, by enclosure on one side and by openness on the other, becomes more than the word "service-yard" may imply. It is a pleasant, outstitting place for the mother who, in California, can do numerous chores while in the open air. Meanwhile, children can play on the lawn or the pavement which connects with the carport. This carport is partially enclosed and roofed, and partially prepared to be roofed over later. But care has been taken not to let such postponement appear as a nuisance in the composition.

Like the kitchen, each bedroom expands visually through a transparent front, as well as through a door into its own outdoors, properly circumplanted and segregated when this planting shall have grown up. In bedrooms it seemed desirable to have natural light over the beds. These beds in a house of space restrictions are also conceived as day couches for every member of the family. Artificial illumination is designed to serve the same ends, so that the occupants might do a good deal of comfortable reading while lying down in their private rooms.  

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The child's room has one fixed glass wall looking outward to the sea, open space for active play, and a door leading to a private planted area.
The parents' bedroom, like all other rooms of the house, relates closely to its own outdoor space.

OPPOSITE PAGE:
Above: The master bedroom has natural reading light falling on the beds, and connects by a glass door to its sunny patio.

Below, left: The central utility unit of the kitchen.

Below, right: With a glass front to the east, the breakfast area has a well dimensioned south window.
The bedroom wing has ample hall closets and a little dressing room with an additional washbowl for the mother. Throughout the house a good deal of natural wood of variation in grain, color, and finish has been used, as this may reduce later redecorating costs. There is blond birchwood in bedrooms; contrasting with it, there is walnut in hall, dressing room, and even in certain areas of the kitchen to counter-balance the enamel finish of shop-fabricated kitchen equipment. In living quarters, which have bilateral light influx—a continuous high ribbon of east windows, and a broad glass front to the west—two woods have been used: natural, somewhat reddish Costa Rica mahogany in the dining area and light, figured elm from the entrance to the fireplace at the southerly end wall. Concealed cove lighting along the easterly window front, ceiling-recessed, practically unnoticeable optical units over sitting corner and dining table, a translucently closed light trough in the westerly roof overhang add illuminative interest and permit significant modifications of the lighting scheme for different usages. The quality of sliding door equipment in living quarters, the hardware of a louvered glass window in the kitchen, or of wardrobe doors in bedrooms, are as important as the color of the slate paving and even the selection of a suitable pine tree to grow up along the prominent brick masonry of the fireplace flue—all beauty and utility, the whole and the detail must be fused and integrated to make successful even a simple, two-bedroom house. It is one of the great problems of our day.

The Perplexed Eye
continued from page 24
Parson painters are intensely concerned with configurational problems, and, since many spectators lack the visual agility to follow configuration as such, the artist has been alienated from his audience. Certain parson critics have noisily decried this tendency to "abstract" art, an abused (and abusive) term frequently used but seldom defined. Yet abstract art, which communicates through configuration, has been widely practiced in various cultures and periods of history. The dissenting critics evidently lack competence and responsiveness in their own field.

Healthy art habits imply the ability to shift attention from the demands of one situation to those of another. In looking at an artwork, we cannot rigidly key our responses to any single way of perceiving, but must shift emphasis from one level to another as the situation changes. Thus an El Greco painting provides intricate configuration, induces religious feeling in the spectator, and communicates the painter's belief in that religion. It is important to note that when imagery and structure have been integrated successfully, as in an El Greco, the spectator does not have to accept the artist's beliefs in order to experience the feelings which that belief has generated.

When the observer, no matter how skilled, has to shift dextrously back and forth between these various kinds of responses, his eye needs time to grasp all the visual and psychological connotations. Since several factors have entered into the construction of an artwork, many an artist has been verbally routed by the question, "but what does it mean?" At such times the artist can retire to one of two previously fortified positions. Either he clumsily evades the problem, appearing to be an inarticulate instrument with little conscious control of his creative efforts, or he becomes aggressively hostile, dismissing the inquirer as an esthetic illiterate. Even though the artist attempts to explain what he has done, the answer to what the work "means" usually remains obscure. The fault, if one can call it a fault, conceals itself in a semantic confusion, in the insistent and elusive use of the word "meaning." If we insist upon asking the meaning of art, we have the prior obligation to know just what we mean by the question.

This obsessive preoccupation with "meaning" gives many discussions of art a peculiarly heated, cloudy and faintly rancid quality not unlike the steam in a Turkish bath. These discussions are usually based on a premise that is rarely exposed, on the implied necessity for an artwork to have a verbal equivalent. Yet a statement about a visual image, apprehended in its full nakedness, can never be the equivalent of that naked image itself. If we are to give the work of art some verbal meaning, place it in some order of values, then we must depend upon just such unreliable statements. Of course, one can discuss the arts, in fact, feel compelled to do so! We can do so most profitably by adhering to the experience as experience and we can accomplish this by restating