

# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

## SOLID SENSATIONS FOR SONOMA

Modern and Natural Elements Soften a Northern California Residence

Architecture by Harvey Sanchez and Conrad Sanchez | Interior Design By Ron Mann |  
Text by Patricia Leigh Brown | Photography by Scott Frances

[VIEW SLIDESHOW](#)



**B**y profession, of course, Ron Mann is a designer. But if you were to write his résumé based on a sprawling new residence overlooking the Lovall Valley in Sonoma, California, you might call him a Houdini of sculptured spaces, a fearless and spirited conjurer of the never-before seen.

“You’ve never seen this before,” he’ll say understatedly, attempting to explain what drove him to design an eight-foot-wide steel dining table capable of spinning like a gigantic lazy Susan, its tapered point bringing to mind a top. “Don’t ask why,” he adds. “Ask why not.”

---

**By his own admission, the designer works**

The residence sits on 19 acres of hillside with incomparable views of Sonoma County, Mount Tamalpais and San Francisco Bay. It was already under construction when serendipity intervened—something about a swerving car, a country road and a chance encounter between Conrad Sanchez, who conceived the house with his architect father, Harvey, and Mann, a designer the Sanchezes had

best when he is  
given free rein.  
("Then, my only  
restriction is  
myself," he  
allows.)

long admired whose reputation extends far beyond the valley. They soon recruited him to design the interiors and to architecturally tweak the residence; he added courtyards, stairs and the poolside terrace. "The plan was to complete the house and then put it on the market," says Mann. "But the realtor got so excited as work was progressing that she couldn't stand it. She brought a couple up to see it, and—wham—they bought it instantly."

---

They also gave Mann carte blanche to finish the interiors. "He showed up in Armani jeans and snakeskin boots," the wife recalls. "He's an amazing artist and had a deeply felt connection to this place. I could tell that his vision couldn't be replicated by anybody else."

By his own admission, the designer works best when he is given free rein ("Then, my only restriction is myself," he allows). Mann approaches interiors sculpturally, searching for the juxtapositions of scale, texture and color that will make a given space feel as though it does not resemble any design that has existed before it. "I like bold design," he says of his philosophy. "I believe in angles, not rectangles. I think they humanize a space. After all, human beings aren't rectilinear."

The great room is a combined kitchen, dining area and living area enveloped by floor-to-ceiling windows that visually bring the live oaks in. The room is defined in large measure by the floor—really a floorscape. Running in ribbons embedded in the concrete are boards of Douglas fir rubbed with metallicized paint. They form subtle paths in a room that might seem intimidating otherwise, intersecting precisely at the juncture where the pointed base of the dining table meets the floor.

The residence is full of wood—especially fir, bay laurel and eucalyptus. Prime specimens are the two 4,000-pound sofas in the living area, chainsawed out of blue gum. To soften them, Mann designed colorful textured cushions made from Turkish rugs and artist's canvas. "I like to say I Mondrianed them," he says of the furniture.

This article was published in the July 2008 issue.

© 2013 CONDÉ NAST. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED  
USE OF THIS SITE CONSTITUTES ACCEPTANCE OF OUR [USER AGREEMENT](#) (EFFECTIVE 3/21/12) AND [PRIVACY POLICY](#) (EFFECTIVE 3/21/12)  
[YOUR CALIFORNIA PRIVACY RIGHTS](#)  
THE MATERIAL ON THIS SITE MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED, DISTRIBUTED, TRANSMITTED, CACHED OR OTHERWISE USED, EXCEPT WITH THE  
PRIOR WRITTEN PERMISSION OF CONDÉ NAST.  
[AD CHOICES](#)

CONDÉ NAST

