



Monday, March 21, 2011

## Architect I Love: California's Brilliant Juancarlos Fernandez

*This much-admired young talent recently completed a dramatic new house in the Napa Valley. Photos below.*

*Now Fernandez is making his next move, founding his own firm, Juan Carlos Fernandez Studio, and bringing his distinct voice to the Napa Valley architecture scene.*



After eight years working at Lail Design Group in St. Helena in the Napa Valley, Juancarlos Fernandez has founded his own practice in the Napa Valley.

Fernandez said, “I am deeply grateful to Jon Lail for the gift of encouraging me to explore my craft in my own way and for his invaluable guidance in winery design. I will miss daily contact with my friends at LDG but am excited to continue work with you through this new venture.”

Quintessentially practical, with a poet’s belief in the power of art, Fernandez creates surprisingly simple, open, understated buildings that provoke the senses. Combining an engineer’s precision with an intrepid passion for difference, he crafts signature houses and wineries as individual as their owners.

### Welcome to The Style Saloniste

I founded THE STYLE SALONISTE as an online style magazine in Summer 2009. I focus on and write in-depth and exclusive stories and interviews. In weekly features, I present insight into creative interior designers and architects around the world, global style, the world heritage of art and culture, decorative arts, and traveling with passion and fearless enquiry. On these exclusive pages I write about worlds to explore, ideas, design visionaries, private travel, style leaders, trend-setters, architectural provocateurs, events, unique hotels, distant places and people, and the world's greatest talents and creators. Come with me on adventures and meet inspiring people.

### DIANE DORRANS SAEKS



San Francisco,  
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### DESIGN



The Style Saloniste Design and Art Direction by Brian Dittmar

[Announcing my new book, ANN GETTY INTERIOR STYLE](#)



Fernandez placed two large openings high in the 50 feet x 16 feet blue wall, partly to break up the massive scale, but also to offer glimpses of blue sky through the wall. "I also wanted these two 'windows' to be symbolic of the two owners of the house, two souls," said the architect.



The blue wall's surface is stucco with gravel in the mix to create a rough-textured surface. The wall was painted with coats of blue paint. The dramatic hue was custom-designed by Fernandez, who closely guards the secret of his special color palette.

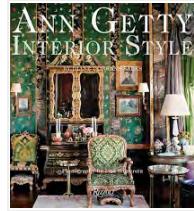
After two decades designing in his native Mexico, in Japan, Canada, Europe and across the United States, Fernandez crafts architecture that defies cultural limitations. He has a love of clean modernity, enlivening it with the clarity of glass, steel and concrete and with fervent accents of color. It's evocative of the pioneering Mexican architect, Luis Barragán, and in bright contrast to Napa Valley's usual stone and wood.

Fernandez advocates for progress in architecture, constantly researching the science of architecture. He seeks unexpected ideas, favors renewable materials, and orients design, siting, and materials toward future generations.



The house was designed to be almost transparent, with natural light and fresh air. An elongated blue stucco wall punctuates the low-slung residence. A concrete path leads to a pivoting glass front door. To the left of the wall is the garage. Construction: Grassi and Associates, Napa.

Juancarlos Fernandez grew up in Guadalajara admiring the highly influential modernist architect Luis Barragan, who made structures of vivid shocking pink, indigo, yellow and orange a beloved and essential element for the Mexican design vocabulary.

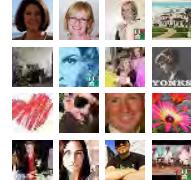


ANN GETTY INTERIOR STYLE, my new 240-page book, was published by Rizzoli mid October. I've been working on it privately for several years—and I am so happy with the beautiful production...with velvety paper and elegant printing. Lisa Romerein produced new photography, and Paul McKevitt of Subtitle New York (who has designed my previous five Rizzoli books) is the accomplished art director. Early comments: 'Congrats on the book. It's gorgeous', James Reginato. 'It's the design book of the season', Jennifer Boles, The Peak of Chic blog. Holly Moore the great editor-in-chief of PAPERCITY in Houston and Dallas said, 'It is the most beautiful book out this fall'.

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**Diane on The Skirted Roundtable**

Barragan's blocks of color—green, pastel pink, terra cotta—insistently signified joy and vibrant life and changed the Mexican built landscape forever.

It was inevitable that Fernandez would bestow a dramatic and exuberant blue stucco wall on his newest work, a house high above the Napa Valley.

**"Even before I started my architecture studies I was very aware of Luis Barragan's purist ideals and love of modernism, and his bold and fearless use of color."** — Juancarlos Fernandez

Fernandez brought exuberance and a sun-struck palette to a dramatic new house he designed for John and Diane Livingston, founders of Livingston Winery in St. Helena.

Their house, with its clear and superbly delineated lines has a freestanding wall the color of the California sky. Homage to Barragan.



"Even before I began my architecture studies, I was very aware of Barragan's modernist houses with splashes of color as his signature," said Fernandez. "I admired the way he used free-standing walls to create outdoor spaces. That was my inspiration for the blue wall of the Livingstons' house, Casa Cielo Azul."

Barragan traveled to Paris in the 1920s and his subsequent work was highly influenced by Le Corbusier, the master of Modernism.

"Barragan brought emotion and Mexican sensuality to the International style," noted Fernandez. "He was a master of filling a house with light and air. His concepts have been highly influential on my work."

**"Beauty, inspiration, magic, enchantment as well as the concepts of serenity, silence, intimacy and amazement have never ceased to be my guiding light."** —Mexican architect Luis Barragan (1902-1988)

The new house designed by Juancarlos Fernandez stands on a five-acre property that crowns a hilltop verdant with pine trees and Douglas firs. Views of the valley are framed by Howell Mountain. San Francisco is visible, far to the south, on a clear day.

"My goal was to keep the house very understated, but with great warmth and emotion," said Fernandez. "The Livingstons were intrigued by my idea of an open house."



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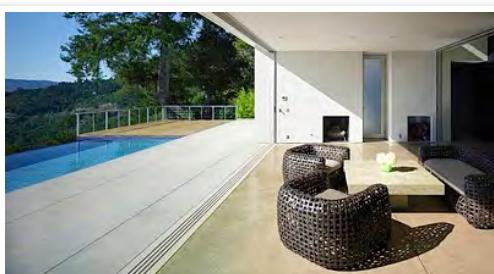
St. Helena-based Leslie Wilks Design orchestrated the interior décor, including custom sofas in the living room. The French club-style occasional chairs and coffee table were also designed by Leslie Wilks. The wrought iron console table base was designed by Ron Mann and finished with a hand-selected marble top.



Fernandez, who studied architecture in Mexico and Japan and traveled throughout Europe to study classical as well as contemporary architecture, designed an almost see-through house, all-glass to the north and the south.

"I took a very minimalist approach, paying attention to even the simplest details," Fernandez noted. This purity has a very cool, calm effect on each room. Natural light plays on the plaster walls. Cross breezes keep the rooms comfortable all year.

As his ideas progressed, Fernandez came up with the idea of a monumental wall to give the house stature, presence and its inherent character.



Adjacent to the living room is a thirty foot-wide terrace, which overlooks the pool and the valley. The pool surround is ipe wood, a sustainable hardwood that is ideal for outdoor use. The veranda furniture is by Janus et Cie: Sofa and side chairs with Sunbrella upholstery. The dining table, chairs and benches: Soho. The small stool is from I.A.P. in San Francisco. Terrace décor by Leslie Wilkes Design.

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Fernandez said he worked very closely with his clients to tailor each detail to their requirements. But this residence transcends the personal to become a powerful presence in the growing list of important new architecture in Northern California.

"Every time I visit the house, I see a confirmation of the calm power of minimalism." Said Fernandez. "The blue wall is a powerful presence. It reminds me of the importance of contrast and surprise in architecture. It gives me great pleasure."



#### THE DETAILS: Casa Cielo Azul

- Designer: Juancarlos Fernandez
- Contractor: Grassi & Associates, Napa
- 3,500 square foot residence, which includes a 1,000 square foot covered terrace.
- Exterior materials: Veneer plaster, corrugated metal roof in the central structure, cool-roof rest of house. Fleetwood aluminum doors and windows. Concrete floors. White oak stained finish on all interior doors and cabinets. Natural steel plates on fireplace, custom-designed by Fernandez.
- Exterior Blue wall is 65' long by 15' high.
- Solar panels on roof.
- The house is energy efficient. Clerestory windows are remote controlled in kitchen and living room for natural light and ventilation. (Air conditioning was installed and owners seldom turn it on.)

#### CONTACT:

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#### CREDIT:

All photography by California photographer, **Adrian Gregorutti**, published here with express permission. Photographer Adrian Gregorutti lives in the Napa Valley, and his distinctive and dramatic photography of wineries, residences and antique barns have captured attention of connoisseurs and clients.

*clear only when you look into your heart. Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside, awakens." – C.G. Jung*

*I wish you a late Happy New Year,  
"Tavarua" The Traveler*

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