

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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Open House

Stylish Living, Indoors and Out



Plus: AD Visits Sharon
and Ozzy Osbourne

Country-Manor Chic
Malibu Modernism
Palm Beach Grandeur

A photograph of a modern, multi-story house at night. The house features a large, cantilevered upper floor with a wooden slat ceiling and glass railings. The ground floor is primarily glass-walled, revealing an interior with a staircase and large windows. The house is illuminated from within, and the sky is a deep blue. A green lawn and some foliage are visible in the foreground.

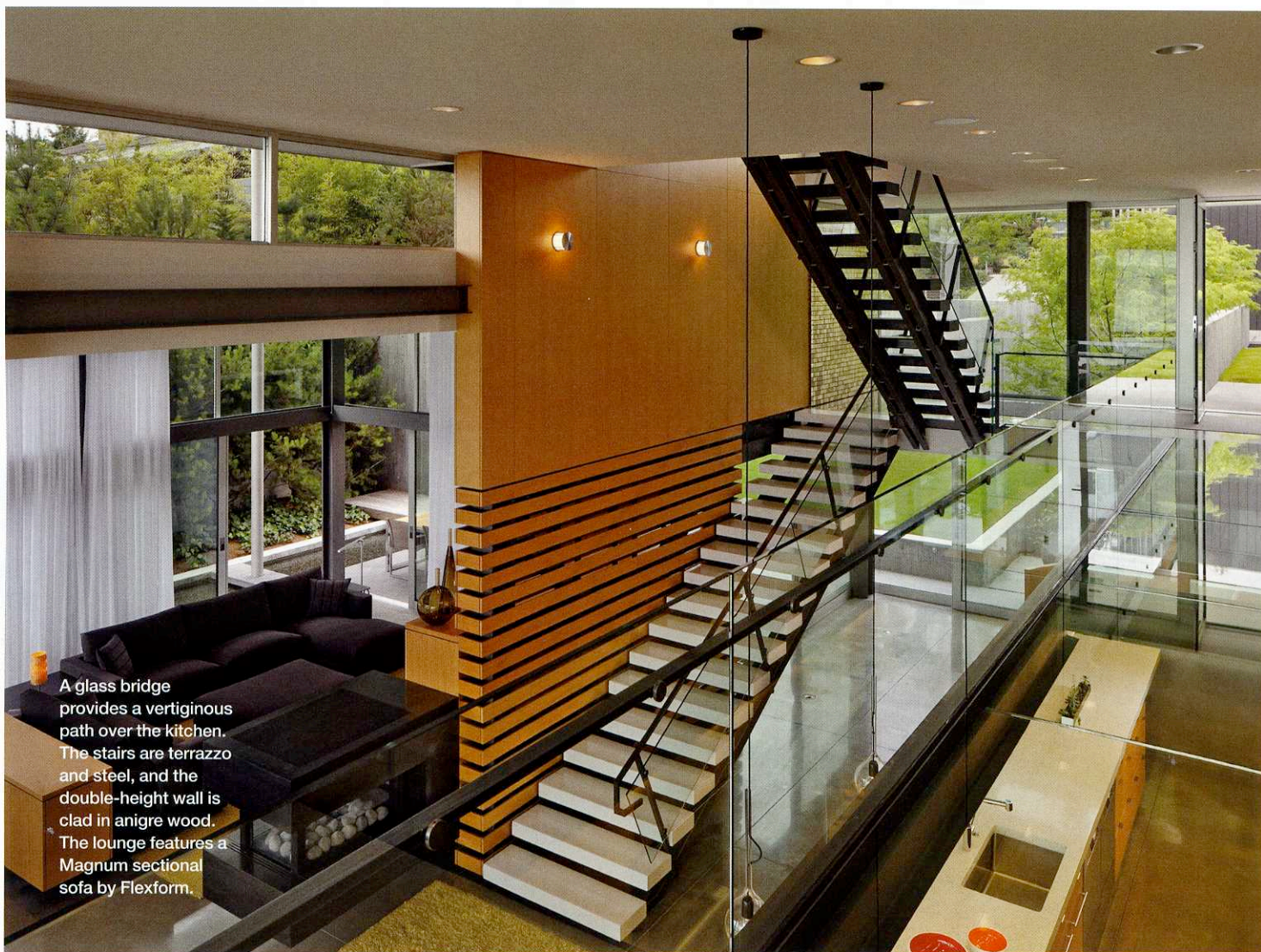
Architect Eric Cobb
of Seattle built this
contemporary lake-
front home on Mercer
Island for businessman
Justin Graham; the
landscape design is
by Bruce Hinckley. For
details see Sources.

DOWNSTAIRS, UPSTAIRS

With an artful void carved out between the ground floor and bedrooms, a showstopping Washington house by E. Cobb Architects is a reminder that less can often be more

TEXT BY FRED A. BERNSTEIN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAUL WARCHOL





A glass bridge provides a vertiginous path over the kitchen. The stairs are terrazzo and steel, and the double-height wall is clad in anigre wood. The lounge features a Magnum sectional sofa by Flexform.

Entrepreneur Justin Graham made two decisions after acquiring the site for his new home on Washington state's Mercer Island: First, he wanted living and dining areas at ground level to create an

easy flow between indoors and out. Second, he wanted his bedroom perched some 30 feet higher, with views that would extend all the way to the distant Cascade Mountains. What he didn't need were a lot of spaces in between.

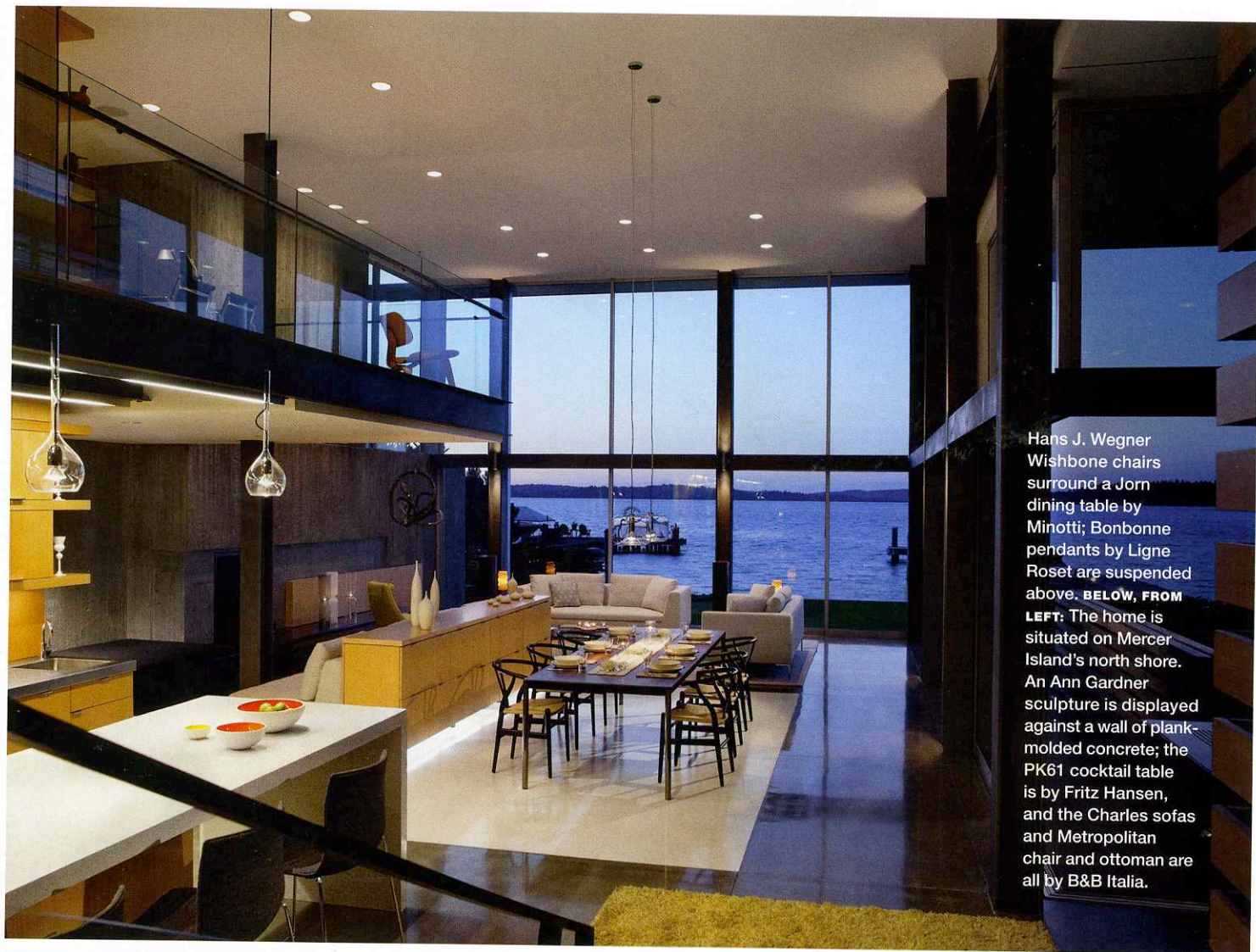
Seattle-based architect Eric Cobb realized both goals by designing a dramatic three-bedroom residence that almost seems to levitate. "We pushed parts of the house down as low as we could and other parts as high as possible," says Cobb. He and structural engineer Jim Harriott used two slender steel columns to support the Alaskan yellow cedar-clad upper bedroom level, making it appear to float out over the waters of Lake Washington.

Graham's family founded a company that makes lighting and trim components for vehicles—"class-A surfaces," he says, which is automotive jargon for features that are seen and touched. Quality surfaces would also be important in the new home he planned to share with his daughters, Sydney, 11, and Saylor, 7. Glass would be

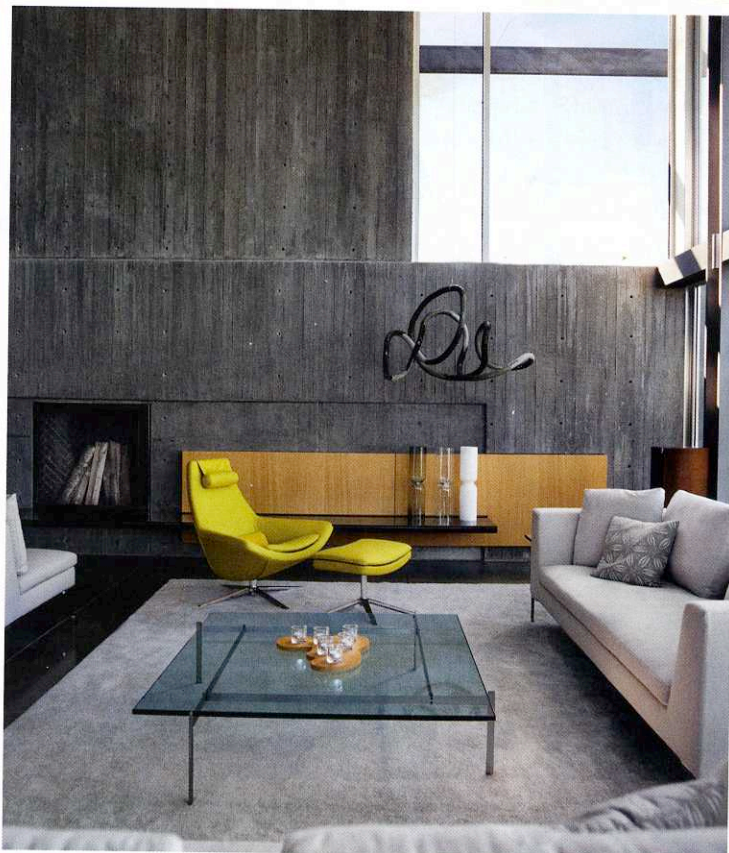
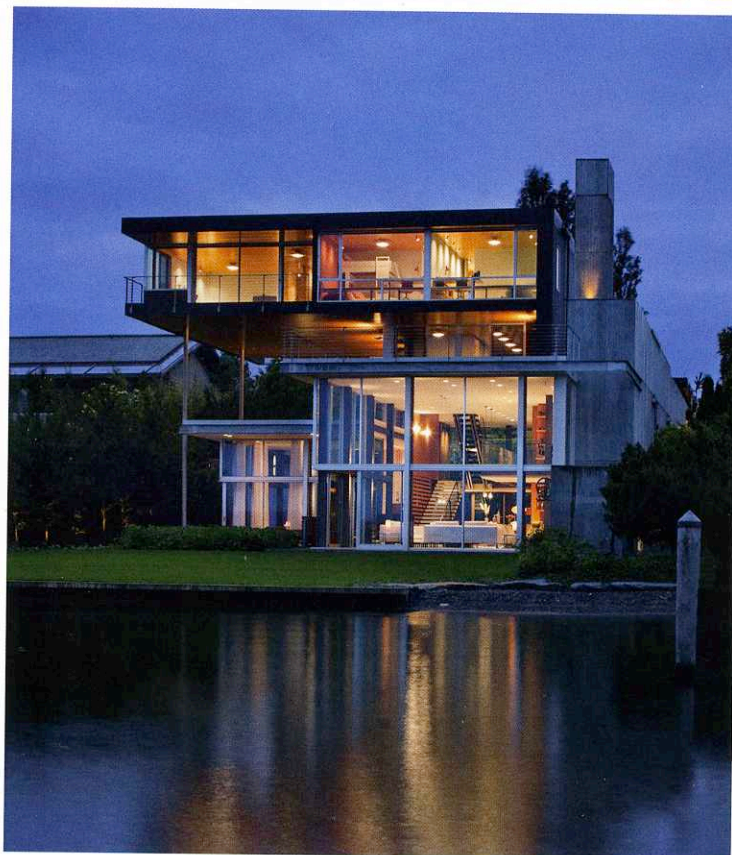
instrumental, since Graham wanted an airy feeling and a sense that the home was more window than wall, with next to nothing hiding behind Sheetrock. It helped that the spot he chose was on the north shore of the island. As Cobb explains, "You're not fighting the sun," so there was no need for shading devices on the lakefront façade.

But building a glass house in a crowded neighborhood posed a privacy problem. And that reminded Graham of Palm Springs, California, where he owns a vacation retreat designed by noted modernist architect Donald Wexler. "In Palm Springs," he says, "you have a wall around the property and then you can live indoors and outdoors with all the seclusion you need."

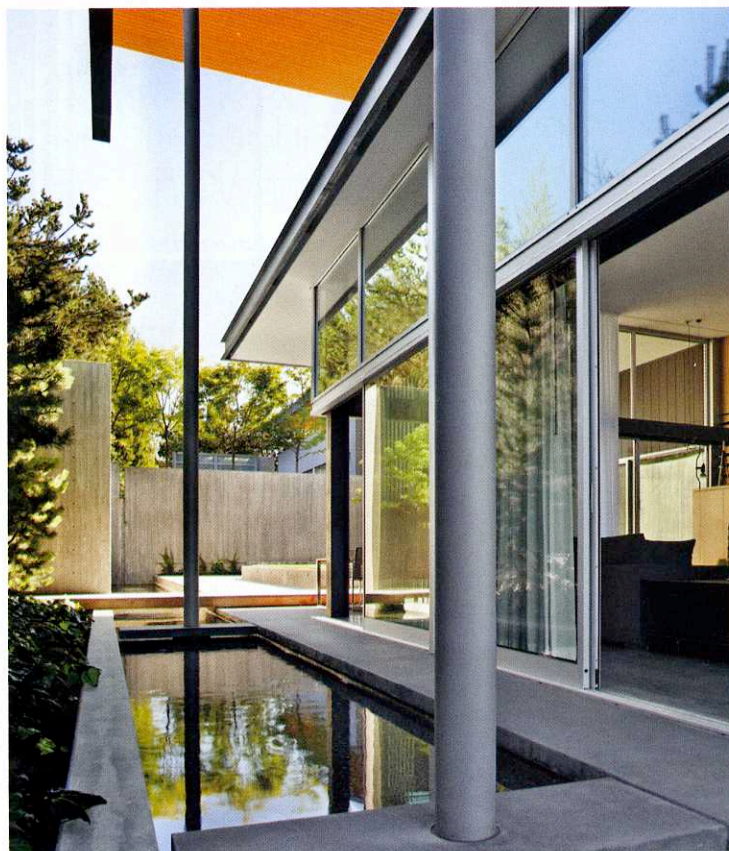
To produce that kind of compound, Cobb and landscape designer Bruce Hinckley decided to excavate the area between the residence and the street. "When you're down in the courtyard," Hinckley says, "you're completely unimpacted by the neighborhood." The front walk is a raised pathway that skirts the courtyard, with two



Hans J. Wegner
Wishbone chairs
surround a Jorn
dining table by
Minotti; Bonbonne
pendants by Ligne
Roset are suspended
above. **BELOW, FROM
LEFT:** The home is
situated on Mercer
Island's north shore.
An Ann Gardner
sculpture is displayed
against a wall of plank-
molded concrete; the
PK61 cocktail table
is by Fritz Hansen,
and the Charles sofas
and Metropolitan
chair and ottoman are
all by B&B Italia.



In a daughter's room, the Catifa desk chair is by Arper, the rug is from Pottery Barn, and the walls are painted in Benjamin Moore's Capri Seas. **BELOW, FROM LEFT:** A reflecting pool with LED lighting runs alongside the house. The master bath features walnut cabinetry and Dornbracht sink fittings; the mosaic wall tile reflected in the mirror is by Bisazza.





The master bedroom includes a Helion sectional sofa by Minotti and an Eames desk chair by Herman Miller; the built-in desk and platform bed were custom made.

90-degree turns Hinckley carefully conceived, the owner says, “to force you to experience more of the site.”

Translucent-glass front doors deposit visitors onto a mezzanine. Terrazzo-and-steel stairs lead down to the living, dining, and kitchen areas and up to the small third floor (where Graham’s gym is located) and the hovering fourth floor (which includes three bedrooms and a playroom). On the mezzanine level, a vertiginous 30-foot-long glass bridge carries the fearless over the open kitchen—with an island “big enough to land an airplane on,” Graham jokes—to the home office.

The ground-floor living/dining area is anchored by a fireplace made of concrete that was molded against rough-cut pine planks; its rugged surface provides a welcome contrast to the sleek glass around it. This is one example of what Cobb calls the home’s “language of controlled raw materials”—wood, concrete, and steel kept natural, but fitted together with precision. Keeping those elements in mind, Seattle interior designer Elizabeth Stretch chose contemporary furniture in muted shades that wouldn’t detract from the setting, both natural and architectural. Upholstered pieces, such as Charles sofas by B&B Italia, stand on unskirted legs, letting light and air continue through the spaces.

To Graham, the openness of the dwelling makes it the perfect home for a single parent and his children. “The girls can be in any part of the house, or even outside, and I can see or talk to them,” he says. One downside to glass walls, however, is that they become black and featureless at night. As a solution, Stretch provided sheer cotton-and-linen curtains in the den, which, Graham says, create “a soft, dreamy white surface” after the sun goes down. For further intimacy, he and Cobb trained lights on the interior steel columns and built-in anigre cabinetry. Outside, there are plenty more nighttime effects, including a five-foot-long gas fire feature, as well as a reflecting pool lit by LED panels that are driven by the kind of high-tech controls Graham has mastered as an automotive lighting expert. In the evenings he can make the pool any color he likes. “If my little girls are having a sleepover,” Graham says, “I make it purple.”

Such atmospherics play very well at parties—and Graham has thrown a few for as many as 100 guests. But the house is at its best when experienced from its hovering private spaces: the top-floor rooms with their knockout views. “There’s restraint and austerity in so many parts of the project—but that’s intended to set up other moments where things are more rich,” Cobb says. “Go up to the master bedroom—it’s astounding.” □