



LA architect Anthony Eckelberry likens architecture with creating functional sculpture and re-adapting older forms to newer designs, in this interview with Niranjana Mudholkar

What does architecture mean to you? Where do you seek your inspiration from?

Architecture is a chance for me to sculpt three-dimensional space. Each and every project is a chance to create a walk-through sculpture and there is the added interest of making it so

About Anthony Eckelberry

Anthony Eckelberry, the Paris-born architect, has been designing homes and restaurants for the last 20 years. New homes and remodelling projects that Anthony has designed are located throughout Brentwood, Beverly Hills, Hollywood and other areas of Los Angeles. *(Images above depict the before and after versions of a house in LA remodelled into a two-storey "Provence" style house)*



Anthony has designed some of the best restaurants in LA for clients such as Wolfgang Puck, Joachim Splichal and David Myers. He can be contacted at anthony@eckelberry.biz

Living room of a new contemporary home in Hollywood, California



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functional that it will remain. I get my inspiration from the moment. That includes the client talking to me, the space that the project will occupy and whatever general creative concepts I am thinking of at the time.

Do you identify with any school of thought? Has any particular architect or style influenced your architecture?

In my new work, I am an old-fashioned modern architect following in the footsteps of California architects such as Neutra, Schindler and particularly John Lautner. For their organisation of space and ornament, I very much admire Palladio and architects of eighteenth century England and France. At the same time and particularly in my remodelling work, I feel I am

a continuation of an ancient tradition of reworking constructs of earlier times. Growing up in France, I came into contact with many structures that had been changed and added to several times through the ages, frequently from Roman times on. It is interesting to me to re-adapt earlier buildings for a new client and that is senior to any particular style in those cases. The constant for me in terms of style is creating clarity or organisation and a simplicity that leads to spiritual peace for the inhabitant.

How significant are materials for you to define your architectural ideas? Have you experimented with any new materials?

I enjoy using and thinking of materials. In traditional work, the materials are time-tested, but there is still the opportunity to investigate textures and the response to light of different surfaces, such as can be obtained with different plaster finishes. Experimenting with new materials can be challenging because solving the quirks of the material can take up a lot of time.

What is your opinion about materials like titanium and plastic that are breaking new grounds in architecture?

For a restaurant project, I had decided to create titanium 'canvases' framed like artwork, as titanium can be tinted various metallic shades of colour. Getting these colours right took many tries. More recently, in a residential project I used the same titanium process to install kitchen counters made of natural-coloured titanium and applied coloured titanium as a wall finish. This is the first application of titanium in a home environment and makes the best use of its many qualities. We wanted to coordinate the colour of the stainless steel appliances with greens and yellows in the room and titanium was the ideal material to bridge the colours. Given titanium's ability to be tinted various metallic shades, we selected the colours that would harmonise best. This project shows that in the right hands, this exotic material has potential for luxury applications, combining its sanitary and artistic qualities.

You were born in Paris. Would you say there's a French influence on your work? Have you ever considered taking your work to Europe or even beyond?

Though it may not be directly apparent, there is a great deal of French influence in my work in the sense that a clarity of design was encouraged in official French architecture for several centuries. As a child in Paris, I lived in a building that had been a royal palace (the Palais Royal) with a great sense of style and the country house that we had outside of Paris was fascinating to me with its layers of history in the stone. I have a sense that I am creating 'future archaeology' in my present-day work. I am currently doing work in other states such as Hawaii, Alabama and Utah. I enjoy visiting Tokyo; and Hong Kong at night is magical. Other countries? Who knows?

Architect Daniel Libeskind once said, "Harmony is found in slight differences..." What is the harmony in your architecture?

The harmony is that I have taken the idea that the space presents and offered it back with a subtle rationality of light and arrangement that leads to peace for the viewer.

How much do you/your firm get involved in the actual process of construction?

I am always involved in the process of



Kitchen view of the new contemporary home in Hollywood. It looks through the kitchen to a mural on the wall in the dining room beyond.

construction by making site visits and solving construction issues with the contractors. I really enjoy being on the site, seeing the space take shape and refining the particular details.

You are well-known for your remodelling projects. Without imposing any elements on the new creation that do not belong to the original - you actually manage to increase the size of the existing structure and also retain the charm of the original. Please tell us more about this aspect of your work.

I take remodelling in two directions: If the structure is attractive and has style, the parts that I add are designed in the spirit of the

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Profile

original design. I take pride in making it difficult to see that any addition has even been made. I am confident that the final result will always have some characteristics that I bring to it such as the flow of the rooms or the way the light comes in through a carefully placed window. Now, if the structure does not possess

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style and character, my work will bring that to the building. It could be any style, but that choice is influenced by the locale and the client.

You have also been a specialist in high-end retail spaces and restaurants for almost two decades now. What have been the highlights of your work in this arena? Can you elaborate on that with some examples?

I have designed a number of restaurants in the Los Angeles area - but in this town, high-end restaurants come and go very, very quickly. Some of the work I did at the first location of Spago for Wolfgang Puck was there for some years and a restaurant I completed two years ago called Sona will be there for a long time to come. A salon I completed on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills is very successful so that pleases me. Los Angeles architecture is in a constant flow of construction and demolition. This makes it fun as there is always new opportunity, but at the same time I know that what I build has a strong chance of being modified in the coming years, either by me or by others.

What do you enjoy doing more - multi-family buildings or single owner homes? Why?

A single family home offers the opportunity to play with space as art. Since the amount of space a family truly needs to live is frequently a great deal less than what we are building, the extra space or volume can be used to create an artistic effect. I always enjoy multi-family projects, but the demand has lately been more for the single-family structures.

I am sure you have loved doing all your projects. But if you were to name a single project that has really made you proud, which one would it be?



Entrance to the new contemporary home in Hollywood



A few years ago I designed the complete renovation of an estate in the Hollywood Hills. The client and I had a great convergence of ideas on the project and I designed elements such as copper-shingled roofs, a Japanese-style bridge over a waterfall and other elements that created a sense of magic in the space and outdoors. I was also able to build the project in a timeless modern style that fit the space well.

Which are your ongoing projects?

I have more than a dozen projects in progress at this time such as a hotel project, several houses; a couple of restaurants and now a residential project in Hawaii. I like creating the Hawaiian design with a laid-back aesthetic. It also gives me a chance to bring a surfboard and enjoy the beach between meetings.