

Keen on Neutra



The open-plan view includes a George Nakashima table, refinished Hans Wegner Wishbone chairs and an Eames lounge chair and ottoman courtesy of Todd Saunders' grandfather. Next to the Polder sofa is a Hip Haven bullet planter, and to the left of the purse on the floating hearth is the entry to the kitchen. Through the windows we see a vintage Brown Jordan set and on the wall, prints by Thomas Campbell.

text Michelle Gringeri-Brown
photography Jim Brown

Todd Saunders might consider himself a Richard Neutra geek—or maybe more of a dork—when it comes to closely studying the designs of the Vienna-born architect. He’s toured as many of Neutra’s structures as possible, including 10 homes in the Silver Lake neighborhood of Los Angeles where the architect’s design office still stands. He’s shot dozens of photos of details and measured the tolerances between, say, a wall and a door hinge. And he tracked down the FSB hardware used in Neutra homes in the required aluminum finish for his own raised ranch in Long Beach, Calif.

A producer for fashion shoots, the 38-year-old was living in a post-and-beam apartment with his wife, Ranae, a flight attendant, when they began researching the real estate market in 2009. “We had been focusing more on ZIP code than on [architectural] style,” he says. “We looked at Cliff Mays and some Eichlers in Orange. By 2011, we had decided on Long Beach for its location and rich architectural history.”

The fireplace hearth was stripped chemically, the concrete block sand-blasted, and the firebox repainted and plumbed for gas logs.

In the office portion of the public space, two restored Eames fiberglass shell chairs team up with a Richard Schultz Petal table, a 1948 Nelson bench and a George Nelson drop-leaf desk. The Eames pedestal chair was rescued from a dumpster, and the artwork above is by Isamu Noguchi.

