

# FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE: PATRICK TIGHE REINVENTS MID- CENTURY A-FRAME HOUSE

Edie Cohen | October 27, 2014



Not a painter or a sculptor by profession, architect [Patrick Tighe](#) can still claim ties to the arts. He once spent six months researching and sketching his way through the Eternal City, courtesy of the American Academy in Rome. Back home in Los Angeles, his buildings and interiors are informed by considerations of views, light, and shadow play. “The influences of my past keep showing up,” he says. The

strong forms of his structures are easily on par with sculptures.

Thus, Patrick Tighe Architecture was the perfect fit for Nina Montée Karp and Harvey Karp. She was an actual artist, now an environmentalist and a documentary film producer. He is a pediatrician no longer actively practicing, thanks to the runaway success of books starting with *The Happiest Baby on the Block*. Together, the Karps operate the [Happiest Baby](#), a company dedicated to educating parents according to his gospel on calming techniques. Also together, the couple collect art. But their 1961 A-frame house, which fronts the Pacific Ocean on one side and faces the Santa Monica Mountains on the other, was hardly suited to displaying works by such noted Southern Californians as Ed Ruscha. “It was like a Swiss chalet, dark with heavy wood,” Tighe says. “After living there for 15 years, Harvey and Nina were looking for something completely different.”

Different is what they got. But not before Tighe stripped the house down to its A-frame. He was then able to expand from 2,100 to 2,900 square feet by working some magic with zoning codes and neighborhood covenants. “We kept the footprint but added,” he says, citing an angled volume cantilevered from the second story to transform a tiny bedroom into a study also suitable as guest quarters. This arresting intervention dominates the rebuilt exterior, a crisply faceted volume in white plaster. The void directly below the cantilever is the garage. Alongside it, the front door is unusual and substantial: a 10-foot-high glass panel that pivots hydraulically. For privacy and security, a screen in laser-cut aluminum can slide over the glass. “It’s a bit grand for a modest house,” he demurs. But the interior, with its unmistakable art-gallery allusions, absolutely lives up to the introduction.

The architect’s moves are controlled and masterful. Straight ahead, from the front door, an outward-angling corridor creates a forced perspective to the ocean. Internal views are equally compelling, as tilted

and faceted walls repeat the language of the facade. He didn't have complete free rein when shaping wall surfaces, however. Certain artworks required specific placement. "Only a third of their collection had been displayed previously," he notes. "Along with maximizing the space and the views, the project's driver was to design for the art." A colorful abstraction by [Charles Arnoldi](#), for example, is mounted in a bay in a sidewall of the dining area, which grew by annexing and enclosing space once occupied by a terrace.

Anti-UV glass prevents the art from being damaged by the sunlight that streams in from myriad skylights, including one perfectly aligned with the staircase. Sui generis Tighe, it's nothing more than a set of floating treads precision-cut with a pattern that's denser close to the supporting wall and increasingly open away from it. The perforations not only pick up on those seen in the aluminum screen for the front door but also produce shadows that change with the hour and the season.

Compared to the complexity of the details, space-planning was a cinch. The downstairs is open—seemingly infinite as it extends past the living and dining areas' glass sliders—except for a library, a powder room, and a laundry room. For finishes, "light" and "bright" constituted the chief criteria. The ceiling and the walls that are faceted are painted pure white. Flooring is gray-flecked white terrazzo, radiant-heated in key areas. The existing fireplace got a new quartz-composite hearth. In the kitchen, Tighe says, counters are "the whitest engineered quartz we could find," and glossy white acrylic clads the cabinetry. To temper all the shine, he and Montée chose shades of gray for rugs, upholstery, and the paint on the flat walls. The powder room, with its angular white vanity and gray troweled plaster, is a chiaroscuro mix.

Upstairs in the master suite, the all-white theme continues in the spalike bathroom's creamy marble walls and limestone-resin freestanding tub. Gray returns in the bedroom, with the linen-wool upholstering [Arne Jacobsen's](#) Egg chair and ottoman. The silvery tones of the rift-oak headboard, which soars upward as an angled canopy, were inspired by the bark of the immense eucalyptus tree seen through the windows. Nature also looms large in Harvey Karp's adjacent study, where the sweeping horizontal ribbon window frames the mountain view. Sitting at the built-in desktop, charting out chapters for his next book, he can swivel in his Aluminum Group task chair by [Charles and Ray Eames](#) and calmly take in the panorama. Just what the doctor ordered.

**Project Team:** Evelina Sausina; Chia-Min Wang; William Hu; Antonio Follo; Michael Ho; Ted Digirolamo; Haleh Olfati; Hazel Aquino; Gelareh Arbab; Kervin Lau; [Patrick Tighe Architecture](#). A Chan And Company: Structural Engineer. [Bancroft Construction](#): Metalwork. [Funtime Cabinetry Factory](#): Woodwork. Machineous: CNC Workshop. Sergio's Custom Upholstery: Upholstery Workshop. [Hermosa Terrazzo](#): Flooring Contractor. Borrego & Co.; Tso Construction: General Contractors.