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TRENDSETTER

Homebuilders embrace trends introduced by Southern California architect Robert Hidey, a master of resort-style living.

In

Orange County, California, strewn along the scenic Pacific coastline, are lavish Mediterranean villas and exclusive resorts. Many of those — as well as numerous architectural amenities that luxury homebuyers now take for granted — were authored by local architect Robert Hidey, whose clientele extends to China and the United Arab Emirates.

The architect was born in Memphis but raised outside of Los Angeles in Palos Verdes Estates, a coastal community planned by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., that fostered young Hidey's appreciation for both the natural and built environments. After graduating from architectural school, he was hired by William Pereira, the architect of San Francisco's Transamerica Pyramid as well as airports and hotels around the world. "It was never strictly about the budget, but doing the best possible work for the client," says Hidey of Pereira's approach, which he adopted in his own practice.

After a decade with Pereira, Hidey and a colleague established a firm in Orange County, and in 1990 he founded Robert Hidey Architects (RHA) in Irvine, a city his mentor Pereira masterplanned. After working on large commercial projects most of his career, he began gravitating toward residential design and a flurry of awards reinforced that specialty. Many of the design trends Hidey originally incorporated into homes for celebrities and Fortune 500 CEOs have become nearly standard features in more moderately

priced residences. "At the end of the day, my job as an architect is about solving problems in a creative and responsible way, whether it's in a 60,000-square-foot estate or 1,000-square-foot townhome," explains Hidey.

One of the architect's most important innovations was the incorporation of usable outdoor space — shady sanctuaries adjoining master suites and breezy alternatives to formal dining rooms — designed to take advantage of Southern California's enviable climate. Demand for these spaces, which infuse a sense of resort living into any home, quickly spread to lower price points as even cost-conscious homebuilders embraced the trend. "You can't do successful housing today that doesn't offer covered outdoor spaces integrated into the floorplan," says Hidey.

Hidey has a passion for Mediterranean residential architecture, stating, "Spanish Colonial is an aesthetic that performs very well in Southern California, as it did hundreds of years ago." A classically inspired Italianate design appears in the bungalows and villas RHA designed for the five-star Pelican Hill Resort on Orange County's ritzy Newport Coast. But Hidey is a versatile designer who actually entered the profession as a modernist and has reprised that style in projects like Asher at Playa Vista, a sleek glass-and-stone multi-family development in Los Angeles.

Always conscious of pressures facing ordinary households, Hidey is adept at creating design solutions

that address lifestyle trends driven by changing demographics or economics. At Irvine's Lambert Ranch, for example, extended families are accommodated by fully functioning suites or detached guesthouses. Whether providing privacy for live-in grandparents or grown children, these spaces have become immensely popular in several RHA-designed communities.

Hidey's services are now in demand far beyond Orange County, with clients as far afield as Abu Dhabi and the South China Sea island of Hainan. Although he acknowledges challenges presented by unfamiliar cultures and regulations, Hidey insists most of his work is easily transferable. "They're coming to this office because they appreciate the work we do," says Hidey, who draws energy and inspiration through travel. "Our sphere of influence is now much more significant," he says of RHA's evolution, adding, "The increasing scale of our projects, including masterplanned developments in which we're responsible for entire communities, is very stimulating."

Both of Hidey's daughters, Erin and Ashley, now work at RHA, to the delight of their dad. "Hopefully, someday they'll be taking over this place and I can spend more time sailing and skiing," quips the 63-year-old boss who shows no signs of slowing down. Hidey has recently acquired a hillside home in Laguna Beach, California, which is being reimaged with his own design. **UH**



HIDEY'S ASHER AT PLAYA VISTA OFFERS SLEEK MODERNISM, WHILE SEA POINTE, A COLLECTION OF LUXURY HOMES IN ORANGE COUNTY, REFLECTS A MEDITERRANEAN STYLE.

ROBERT HIDEY