

BEST OF SHOW AND OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FOR A SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENCE

San Diego Home/Garden Magazine, February 1984

Challenge: To create a new house sympathetic to a 60-year-old tea garden on the site, and to capitalize on a spectacular bay view. Over the years, the garden had become very personalized with landscaping, pathways, a fish pond, and, most significantly, several magnificent Australian teaberry trees. The owner wanted a very private, one-person house that was still capable of hosting large gatherings of friends and civic groups.

Approach: It began with the trees. Architect Emsley took pruning saw in hand and spent several days on the site, carefully pruning the ancient teaberry trees until their natural, bent shape seemed to suggest a series of pagoda-graceful towers rising from a misty landscape. Twisted, fractured bark suggested a house with texture, leading to a choice of concrete fins offset by elegant redwood.

Though the house is a basic plan of four towers anchored by a garage, the site demanded extraordinary preparation. Seventeen 2- by 4-foot holes, each over 22 feet deep, were dug by hand: a small-statured miner went down and dug inch by inch, sending the soil back to the surface by bucket. Then workers dropped in steel cages and poured the caissons. Massive concrete walls were planned so that even numbers of molded "ribs" would meet perfectly at the corners, inside and out. Later, one man with a bushing hammers spent weeks carefully knocking the edge off each rib to expose the rough aggregate. Atop this Stonehedge rest glue-laminated beams, and above them float the roof planes, flowing one to the other like leaves that overlap where they fall.

Where one plane meets another, a reveal (always the width of one finger) gives a crisp line of reference. There is no front, back, top, bottom, or side to this house in a finish-work sense: all surfaces received the same attention to detail-it stands as sculpture.

As you pause in the glassed entry, with its tall hinged windows, you feel like a small figurine set in a beautiful glass cabinet high on the hillside. At night the city lights hover below like earthly stars, the polished teak floor is smooth as mink beneath slippers, and the house breathes serenity.

Landscape.- **Takendo Arii**



