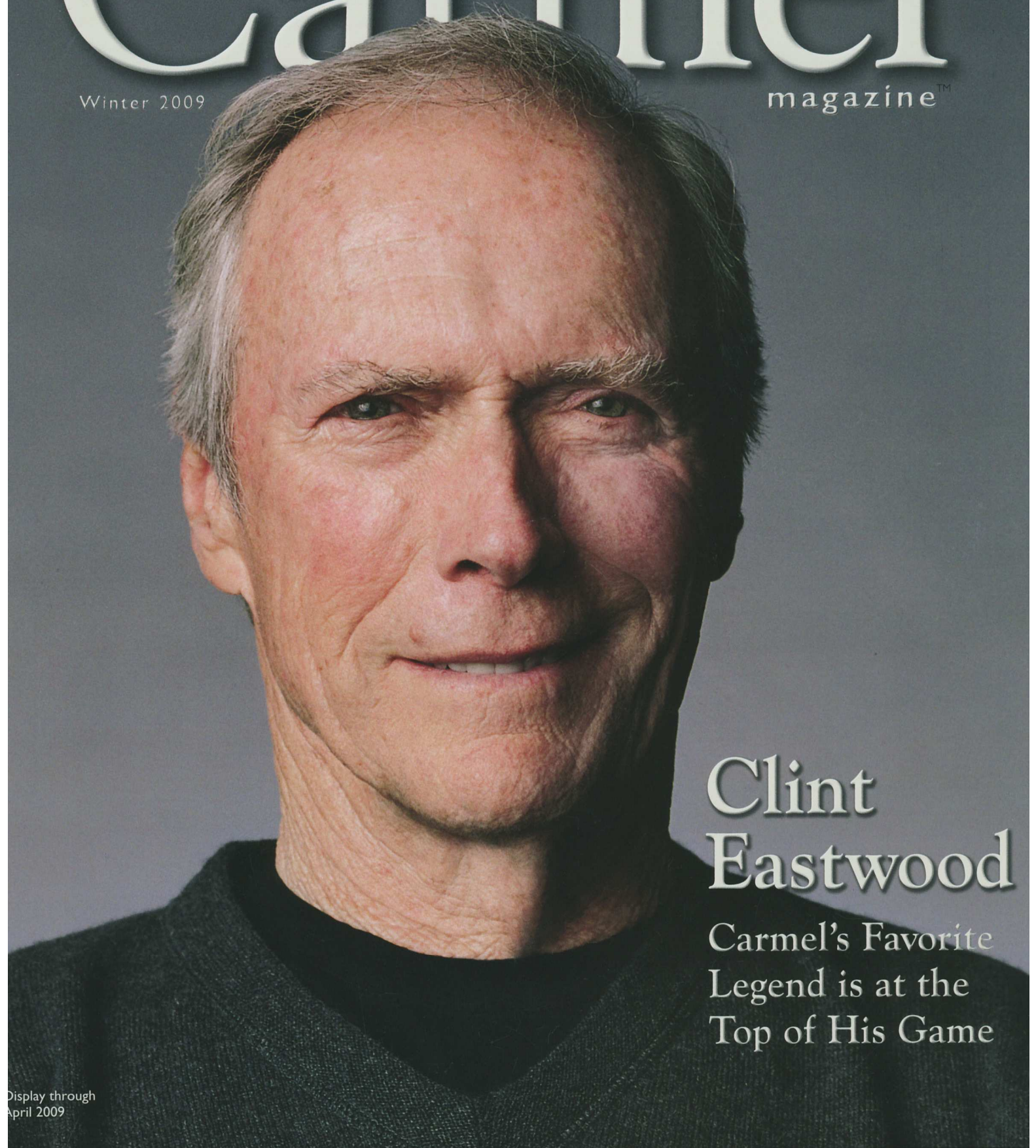


Carmel

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Winter 2009

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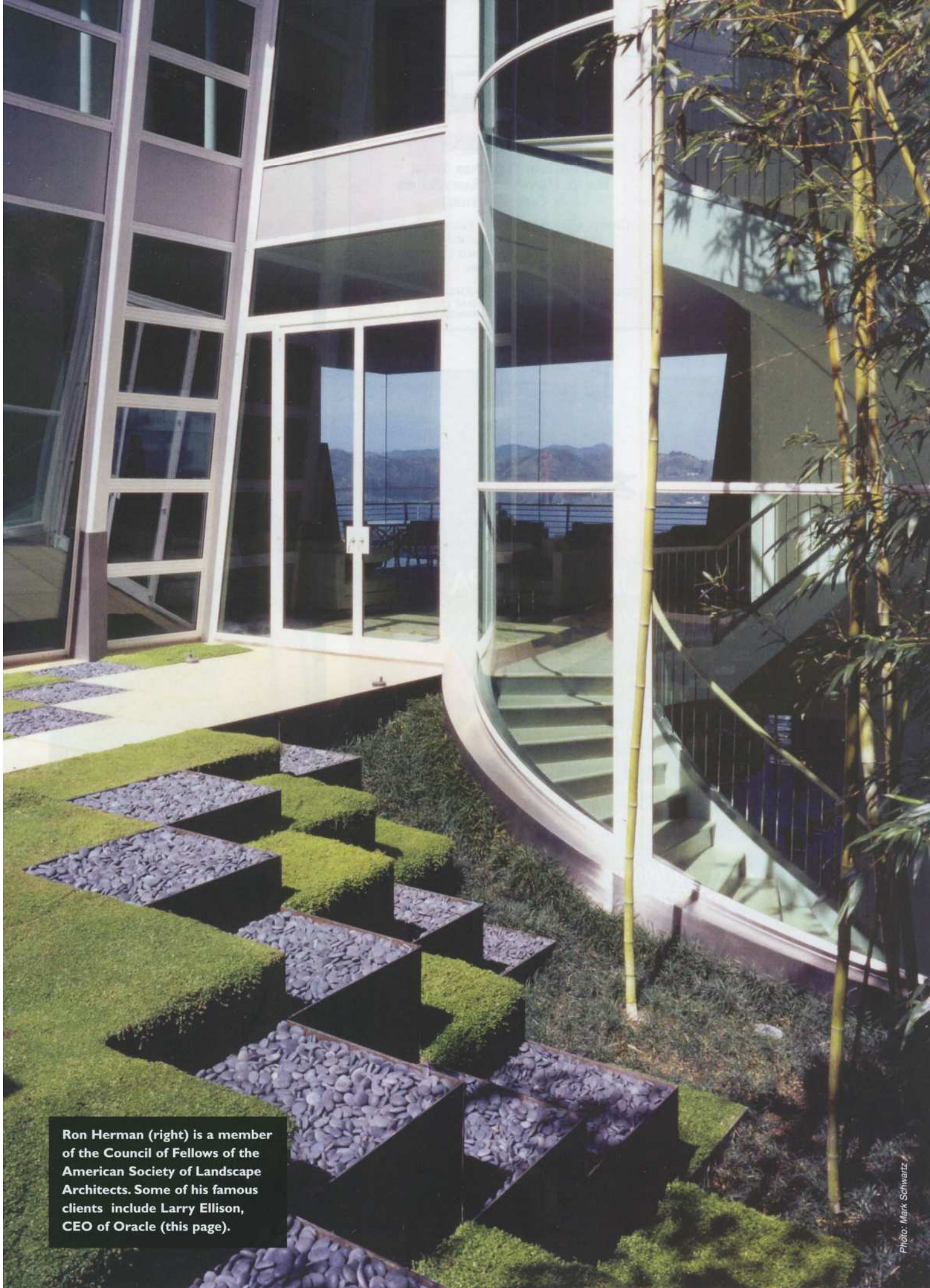


Clint Eastwood

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Ron Herman (right) is a member of the Council of Fellows of the American Society of Landscape Architects. Some of his famous clients include Larry Ellison, CEO of Oracle (this page).

A Garden's Inspired Journey

A Sense of Eastern Mystery from Landscape Architect Ron Herman

BY RENEE BRINCKS

Off Highway 1 in Carmel Highlands, where the waves crash against precipitous coastal cliffs, a grey stone driveway leads to a home bordered by bamboo, flax, gnarled cypress trees and sweet-smelling mock orange plants. A low wall of golden granite outlines the home's front courtyard. In front of the wall, planter boxes spilling over with succulents provide a bright accent; behind it, a pale wooden walkway stretches across the square garden to the front door. From there, stepping stones wind around to the backyard, where a wall of windows on the back of



the home offers impressive ocean views.

"The site looks out over this amazing, dynamic cliff," says landscape architect Ron Herman, who designed the home's gardens. "The weather can be severe. It's not a warm spot and it's hard to grow a lot of things there."

Maintaining what does grow is challenging, too. To prune and care for cypress trees that cling to the vertical rock surfaces, for example, gardeners strap on climbing gear and anchor themselves to the home's deck.

When Herman first visited the property, the



Photo: Mark Schwartz

Considered a leading expert on Japanese gardens, Herman designed the grounds for this Carmel Highlands residence.



Photo: Mark Schwartz

Herman is recognized “for the impact his residential design work has had on more than 400 private gardens... and for teaching...some of the most successful landscape designers...”

oceanfront, cliff-top location reminded him of a Zen monastery on the coast of Japan. He collaborated with Monterey’s Fletcher + Hardoin Architects, who were renovating the home, to build upon that theme.

“When you’re sitting inside, the view is framed by trees. You can just sit back and watch the waves; you can get mesmerized by the waves. It’s almost a monastic life, with just you and the elements, and I tried to follow that throughout the design,” he says.

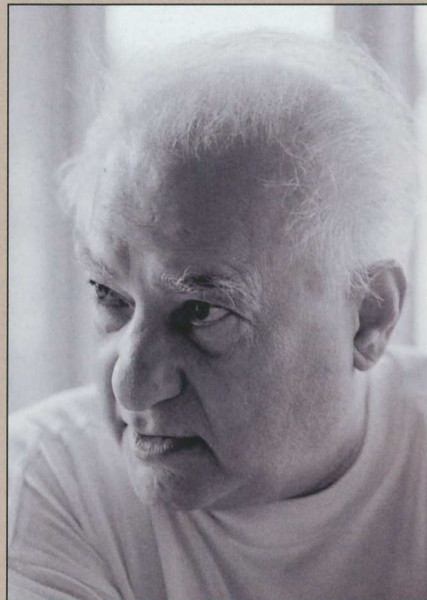
Over the past forty years, Herman’s Japanese-influenced creations have earned him national acclaim. His latest accolade: an October induction into the American Society of Landscape Architects’ Council of Fellows. The organization calls Herman “a leading expert on Japanese gardens” and “a major force in integrating that tradition into the modern American garden.”

Herman has a home in the hills above Monterey, while his business is based in San Leandro. He grew up in the

Architect John Thodos Honored with Robert Stanton Award

Longtime Carmel architect John Thodos recently received the Robert Stanton Award for 2008, the highest honor bestowed by the Monterey Bay Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). The biannual award, presented in memory of celebrated local architect, the late Robert Stanton, recognizes Thodos’ long history of award-winning design and his achievements and contributions to the profession of architecture.

“I feel deeply honored to receive this award,” says Thodos. “I think it culminates a lifetime of work I’ve done: the body of my work, and the influence I’ve had in this area.”



Thodos’ Greek heritage and appreciation of architecture in the Greek Isles, with its open structure and smooth-stucco exteriors, is the genesis for much of his design. This sensibility has morphed into his sense of modernism, a style in harmony with the setting. The result is his signature style, which eludes any particular architectural genre, except, “Pure Thodos.”

“John’s heritage and travels focus on the Greek islands, with the beautiful whitewashes glistening on houses in that intense light of the Mediterranean,” says Rick Janick, who, with Kent Seavey, received the Robert Stanton Award two years ago, and presented the award to Thodos at a December banquet attended by more than 100 architects. “California has a summer landscape in winter light. Our rainy season is a lot like it is in the Mediterranean, an intensity John has reacted to extensively, revitalizing a kind of modernism on the Peninsula.”

Thodos appreciates what has gone before and admires what’s going on in current architecture. “Because of the computer,” he says, “we can crawl around and really see the connections of things, which allows for more artful projects. Some people do buildings; others do architecture. I look for the moment when the building crosses the threshold to become architecture.”

—Lisa Crawford Watson

landscape industry. His father was a nurseryman who created gardens for Hollywood personalities such as Steve Allen and Peggy Lee. After earning a landscape architecture degree from the University of California, Berkeley, Herman completed graduate courses at the University of Kyoto in Japan. He went on to co-author "A Guide to the Gardens of Kyoto," now in its fifth printing, and he taught design and Japanese garden history at Berkeley for more than twenty years.

All the while, Herman expanded his own business and developed a list of high-profile clients, including Joe Montana and Neil Young. To date, he's fashioned more than 400 gardens totaling some \$500 million in construction costs. He has been featured in *Architectural Digest*, *Fortune*, *Wallpaper* and other major magazines.

Herman is perhaps best known for his work

in the Bay Area with Oracle CEO Larry Ellison. In addition to designing multi-million dollar gardens for Ellison's homes in Atherton and San Francisco, Herman landscaped the grounds of Oracle Corporation World Headquarters in Redwood City. In 1995, he began work on a 25-acre Japanese strolling garden for Ellison's

'Currently, Herman is chronicling his approach to design and his experience as a landscape architect in a book slated for release later this year or early in 2010.'

Woodside estate. The project took eight years to complete.

Herman has always been comfortable working with prestigious clients thanks, in part, to his father's influence.

"He was very good at making people feel comfortable, and I tried to learn that from him,"

Herman says. "As a kid, I met people like Peggy Lee and Phil Silvers and they were very much like everyone else. They had more money and people to help them, but they were still taking their kids to school and they were not bigger than life."

Herman now works primarily in Hawaii and California; locally, he's landscaped residences in Pebble Beach, Tehama and the Santa Lucia Preserve. His projects range in size from less than an acre to more than 200 acres. While he is recognized for Japanese-style designs, Herman also incorporates elements of modernism and the California style into his creations.

"I like to think that I take the East and West and marry them in a way that's not trite. Of course I can do a Japanese-style garden, but it's about marrying the styles," he says, adding that his residential designs are meant to give homeowners a feeling of escape—right in their own yard.

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Laurel Hinton, M.S. CCC-A

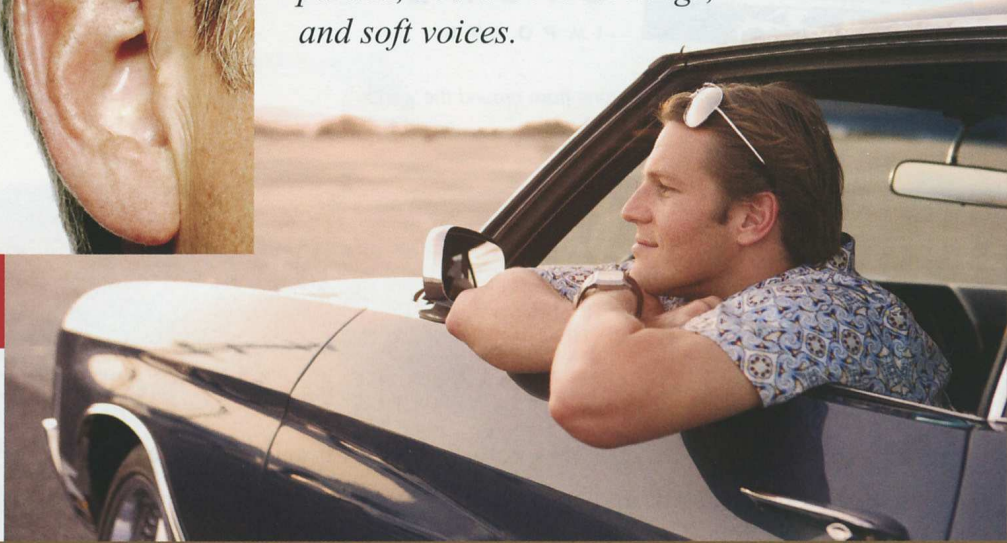
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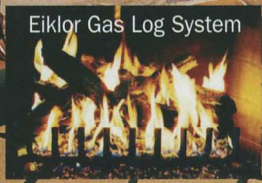
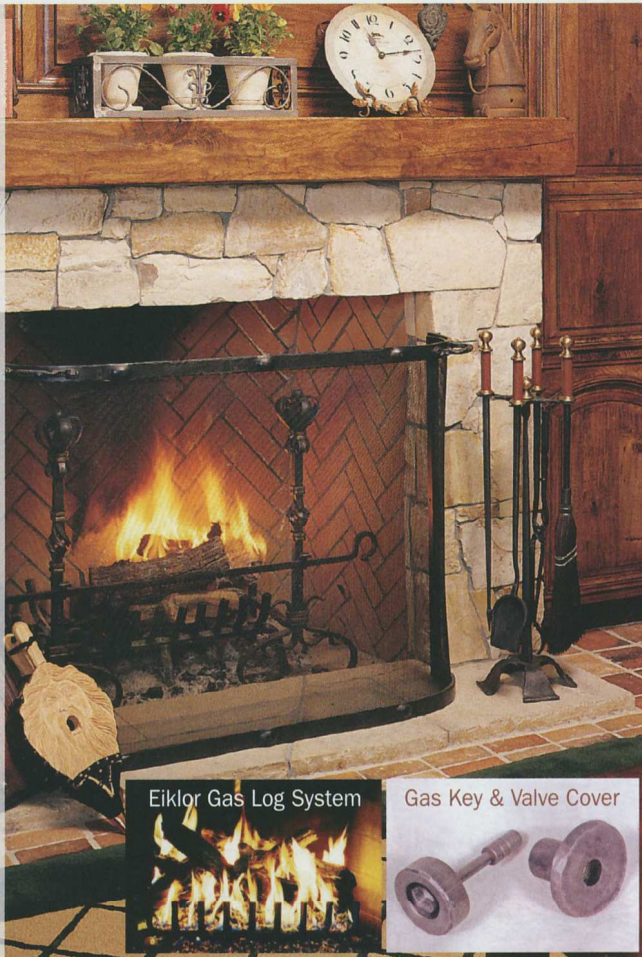
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"In America, curb appeal is big. You pull up and you know where the front door is. People sometimes complain about my houses, saying that you can't see the front door, but I like getting there to be a journey. It's rarely direct, and it often crosses through a sort of courtyard...I'm taking people from the real world and sending them on a little journey."

Currently, Herman is chronicling his approach to design and his experience as a landscape architect in a book slated for release later this year or early in 2010. And even after four decades of work, he says he still feels gratified each time he completes a project.

"A garden starts as an idea in your mind. To take that idea, do some sketches on paper, refine things and then actually get it built seems to me to be a pretty amazing process," he says. "I'm always looking forward to the next one."

To learn more about Ron Herman's landscape designs, visit www.rherman.com or call 510/352-4920.



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