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SEP / OCT 2005



ANATOMY LESSON

# Curb Appeal



THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT ON THIS PROJECT in West Los Angeles, Michael Schneider of Orange Street Studio, had a mantra to work by: "Keep it simple." And it served him well, for the project won an American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) Design Merit award in 2003.

With a very sculptural, bold house to deal with, Schneider set out to tie the architecture to the earth with a landscape that was equally confident and distinctive. The house is composed of a sequence of related geometric forms; large panellike windows stretch views across the interiors and blur the line between inside and out.

Schneider designed the gardens to reinforce the sculptural qualities of the house and extend the interior spaces outward.

The journey from front door to sidewalk was designed to offer a well-integrated transition from a private to a public space.

Mass planting of horse tails, trailing rosemary, ornamental grasses and succulents accentuates the boldness of the composition while allowing a readable series of interconnected layers.

Other elements help create a sense of fluidity

between the interior and the garden, such as a smooth teak landing at the front door that seamlessly transitions into the house and a dark reflecting pool to one side of the entryway path. The result is a house that, in this city where English Tudor stands next to Spanish Revival, looks beautifully grounded. —**JOANNA FORTNAM**

■ For more details see [www.orangestreetstudio.com](http://www.orangestreetstudio.com) or call 323-874-3378.

## KEPT TO A MINIMUM

Far left: Cape rush (*Chondropetalum tectorum*) makes soft brush marks that contrast with the sculptural mass of the house. As with any minimalist project, an immaculate finish is vital—here black pebbles create a seamless bridge between planting and teak flooring. Left: *Agave americana* 'Mediopicta Alba'.





### DRY SEASON

The house, with its natural stone and sand-colored concrete walls, evokes an arid landscape. Schneider responded to this by choosing drought-tolerant plants and allowing them to achieve their natural form and size.

### NATURAL GEOMETRY

Plant forms—mounded rosemary, linear horsetails, the punctuation points of agaves and aloes—all contribute to a graphic composition that reads like the architecture.

### EASY UPKEEP

Maintenance is geared toward achieving a crisp, sculptural effect: Grasses and rushes are combed of brown leaves, agaves are trimmed at the base, and bent or broken horsetails are removed.

### TALL ORDER

A giant century plant (*Agave americana*) throws up a flowering spike—a statement of organic geometry that complements the minimalist styling of the house.