

LUXURY HOME BUILDER

Hidden Beauty

Out of Site / 26

A Perfect Fit / 30

Tuscan Tradition / 34

**Marketing Your
Product Properly / 17**

**New Products to Please
Discriminating Buyers / 39**

Tuscan Treasure

BY ANN MATESI, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

WHEN THEY RELOCATED TO CALIFORNIA FROM DENVER, THE owners of this Tuscan-style country villa had to adjust — not only to a different climate, but to a different style of architecture, says Robert Senn, who designed this 5,000-square-foot residence in Montecito.

“At first they were more interested in a contemporary design for their new home,” Senn says, “one that was more characteristic of the architecture they were used to in Colorado, with large windows, glass block and big, open spaces.”

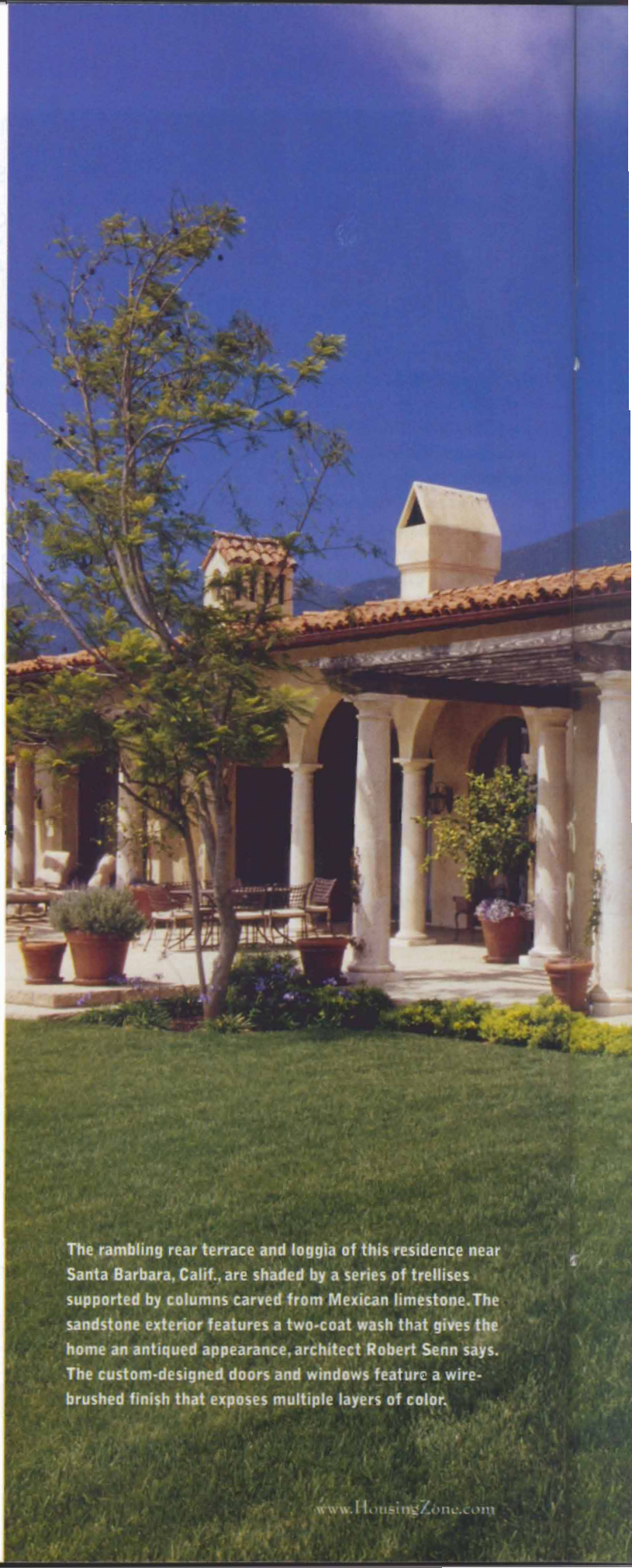
But the couple — the husband is a builder — had chosen a site within an exclusive gated development of estate homes where a strict guideline dictated that all homes comply with the community’s Mediterranean-style design theme.

“There was a learning process initially about what would work here,” Senn says. “In the beginning they were still thinking ‘Colorado.’ But they really became inspired by the possibilities of this style and were ultimately thrilled with the finished results.”

Senn calls the spacious, four-bedroom home exceptionally traditional. “The design is very faithful to the true Tuscan-style country home, with rustic finishes, deep eaves, beamed ceilings and extensive outdoor entertaining space, including a loggia, fireplace and built-in barbecue.”

Finishes and materials throughout the home are of the highest quality, says builder Rolland Yarnell of Yarnell Construction, and this made a significant contribution to the product’s authenticity. “We did not use precast materials anywhere,” Yarnell says. “From the crown molding, which is real plaster, to the limestone exterior columns, everything in this house is the real thing.”

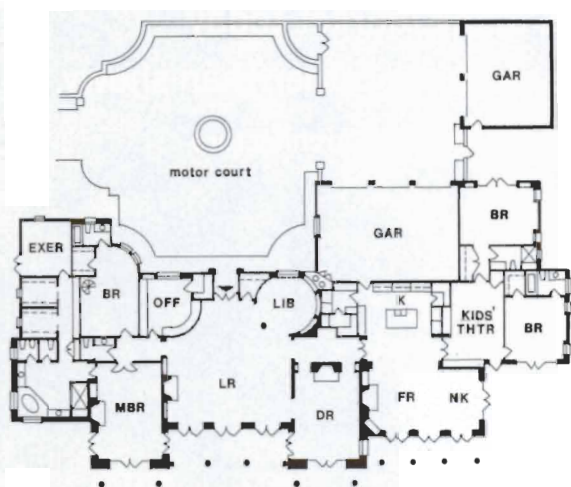
The home’s open interior made a big hit with the



The rambling rear terrace and loggia of this residence near Santa Barbara, Calif., are shaded by a series of trellises supported by columns carved from Mexican limestone. The sandstone exterior features a two-coat wash that gives the home an antiqued appearance, architect Robert Senn says. The custom-designed doors and windows feature a wire-brushed finish that exposes multiple layers of color.

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are more impressed with simple elegance rather than showy,
ostentatious designs.' — Robert Senn, Santa Barbara Architecture





homeowners. The husband calls the floor plan “very positive in terms of spaciousness.” Although the footprint is exceptionally long — nearly 130 feet from end to end — little interior space is dedicated to the establishment of circulation corridors. This results in fewer hallways, larger rooms, better views and less wasted space, the husband says.

The home has no clearly defined foyer. Instead, the entry opens directly into the formal living room, which has a hand-carved limestone fireplace, a pergola-style skylight and triple French doors that provide access to the loggia and outdoor terraces.

The circular library, which adjoins the living room, is the last vestige of the owners’ desire for a contemporary home, says Senn. The rounded shape is balanced on the opposite side of the room by the curved wall of the home office. “The homeowner wanted at least one round room, and this worked out really well,” Senn says.

This home was completed in September 2001. ❧

Style of Home | Tuscan

Location | Montecito, Calif.

Total Square Footage | 5,000

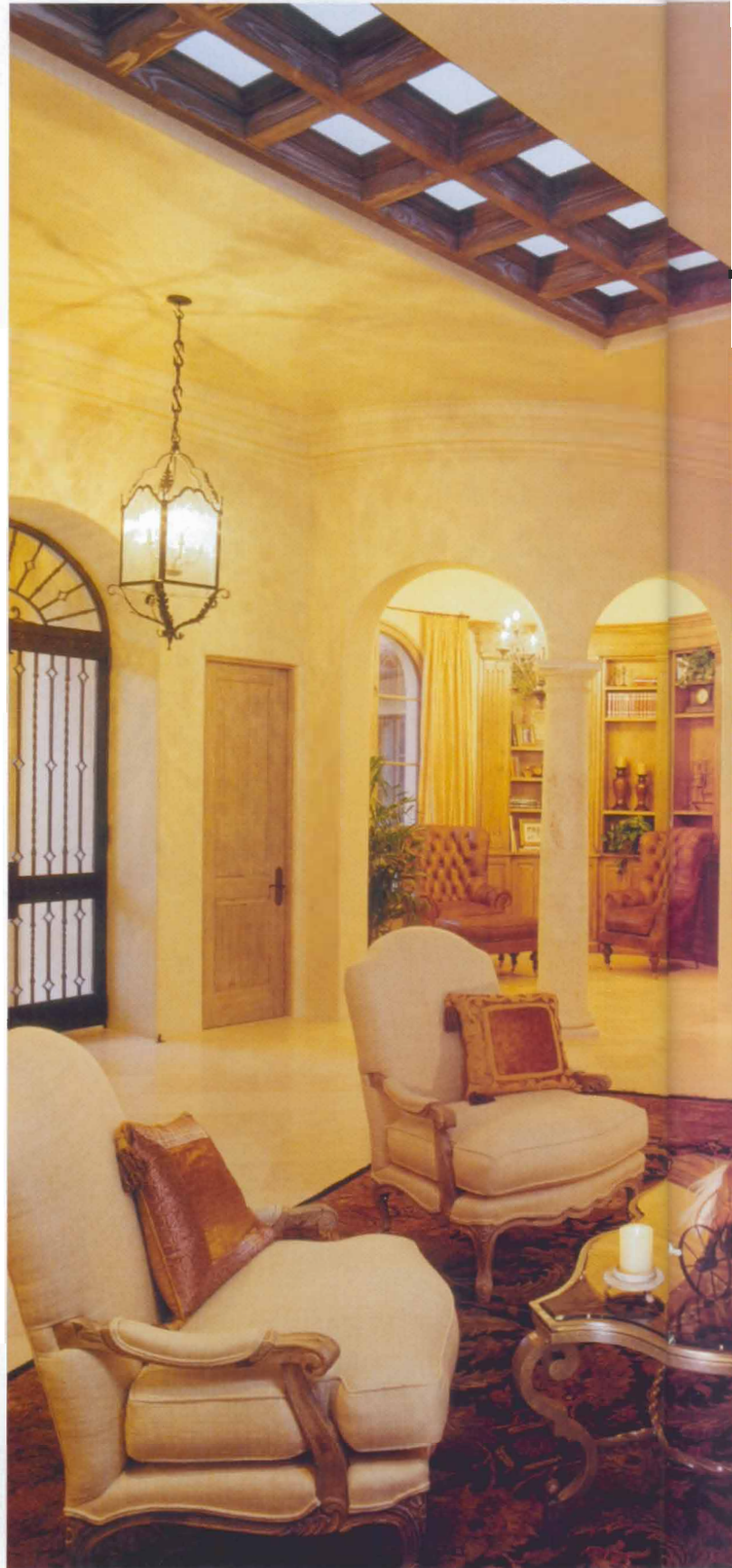
Hard Costs | \$250 per square foot (excluding land)

Builder | Yarnell Construction, Santa Barbara, Calif.

Architect | Santa Barbara Architecture, Santa Barbara

Interior Designer | Mary Lou Sorrell, Montecito
Custom primary residence for upscale family

Major Products Used | Appliances: Viking (range), Sub-Zero (refrigerator), Fisher & Paykel (dishwasher) | Countertops: marble | Cabinetry: Crestwood | Plumbing Fixtures: Kohler | Doors: Southwest Door & Window of CA | HVAC: Bryant | Fireplace: masonry | Lighting: G.A. Porter of Mexico | Flooring: marble, travertine, Mexican limestone | Windows: Southwest Door & Window of CA | Exterior: smooth trowel plaster | Roofing: Mexican tile | Stone Supplier: Quarry Resources of Santa Barbara





The use of beams and crown molding transforms the massive skylight in the formal living room (left) from a contemporary amenity into one of the room's most striking traditional design elements. Beams also are used to accent the ceiling in the more casual living space of the family room and breakfast nook (above), which are directly adjacent to the kitchen. Flooring throughout the home is travertine.

A blend of natural materials and skillful craftsmanship contributes to the authentic Tuscan exterior, which features a two-story tower turret on the entry elevation.

Simply Elegant

"Simplicity and elegance are the hallmarks of authentic Tuscan architecture," says Robert Senn, who designed this custom villa in a new gated community in California's Santa Barbara region.

"There are a variety of styles represented in this neighborhood, including Spanish Colonial, Santa Barbara, Mexican hacienda and early California," Senn says of a community where even the clubhouse reflects an adobe-style influence. "This home blends in beautifully with them all, but it still retains its own unique character."

Senn says buyers of luxury housing in his market are savvier these days. "They know the difference between an authentic design and one that misses the mark."

Inspired by charming homes that dot the Italian countryside, authentic Tuscan residential design produces homes that are elegant without being flamboyant.

Other elements that characterize this style include an asymmetrical roof line; simple shutters; an exterior tower turret; wood brackets; plain or unadorned columns made of wood or stone; terraces, loggias, open galleries and colonnades; beamed ceilings inside; and an earth-tone color palette throughout the home.

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