## MEEK LE

The ultimate in

adaptive reuse — a 747 becomes a home.

## Flight Patterns

A local architect takes recycling to new heights

BY LINDA IMMEDIATO

uring a long flight home from a vacation in Scotland, jetlagged and exhausted, Venice-based architect David Hertz stared out the window, taking in the sky and the long airplane wing that sliced into it. Soon after, he was approached by a client who requested only that her Malibu home have a curvilinear shape and feminine form. And for some reason that airplane wing kept popping into his head. He began designing a large belly-shaped roof that lifted up to an uninterrupted view of a bony mountain ridge, a valley and the ocean. When Hertz was finished, he looked at the rendering, with its curved top opening to the panoramic view beyond, and it looked just like a section of an airplane wing. "I thought to myself," says Hertz, "'Why not use an airplane wing?' Constructing the roof would be expensive, but a wing was already self-supporting, it cantilevers a great distance, and it has sensual shapes and curves." He superimposed a few wings into the topography of the house but decided not to tell his client they were wings, just to see if she liked it. She loved it. After searching the specs on a few models, he found that 747's had the largest wingspan at 2,500 square feet each and were the perfect size to capitalize on the views. He went to work to see how he could get his hands on a few airplane wings.

Hertz found a place out in the desert where planes are cannibalized for spare parts. "It looked like a boneyard," he says, "tons of planes in various states of being dismantled were scattered all around." When he discovered that a \$200 million plane could be bought for \$30,000 (the cost of the raw aluminum), he decided to buy the whole damn thing. And, like

the Native American idea of using all the parts of a buffalo, he'd find a way to use the 4.5 million parts of the jet.

"It's hard to appreciate the scale of a 747.
When you sit inside,
you're only in a tiny
portion," Hertz explains.

The 47-foot-long and 5-foot-thick wings had the perfect sinewy curves he wanted for the roof of the main house; the tail stabilizers will become the roof of the bedroom, and other parts will be chopped up and reused as other structures spread about the 55-acre property. The entire first-class upperdeck cabin will become a guesthouse. The cockpit will be upended, its nose pointing toward the clouds; at 28 feet in circumference and 30 feet tall, it will be used as a meditation pavilion. The cockpit windows will act as skylights in what Hertz describes as a "James Turrell-like dome; it's meant to impress with its volume." All parts will be bioblasted with walnut shells to remove paint and leave the aluminum matted, and the rivets will become more visible. Parts of the fuselage will become a barn and an art studio. But because the parts will be spread out over the large property, which is tiered, you won't see any structure from another. They are built on hidden paths, and as you walk around the grounds, you'll stumble upon them. Hertz says that the structures will have minimal



impact to the range. "They're built low and inconspicuous, not like other houses on the mountain that stick out like big boxes."

This fall the 101 freeway will be closed, and the disassembled parts will be taken by truck, with police escort, from Victorville to the Camarillo airport, and then helicoptered to the site. According to Hertz, since they'll be transporting the parts in large sections, they're minimizing transportation and waste, along the lines of prefab housing. And the project as a whole minimizes raw-material waste.

"My first intent was to build a sublime architectural work—
it didn't start out as 'I think I want to use a plane,' " says Hertz.

"But the most amazing thing to come out of this is adaptive reuse. We've managed to reuse something that took billions of dollars of research and development, was created so judiciously in its use of resources in the first place, and now this post-consumer waste, this giant aluminum can, will be recovered instead of melted down."