

Project  
Kim Residence

Designers  
Richard Kim and Kristine Arellano

Location  
Los Angeles, California

The creative force behind Faraday Future's otherworldly automotive designs takes on a new medium—his own residence.

# Fit and Finish

Text by  
Jim Shi

Photos by  
Michael Friberg

Resident Richard Kim, who works as the head of design at electric car company Faraday Future, tested his know-how with the creation of his own Los Angeles home, a curvilinear structure clad in Cor-Ten steel and black-stained cedar. "This house is different," says Richard. "It's as much a sculpture as it is a place to live."





The kitchen is outfitted with a granite countertop and custom casework; the hardware is by Tom Kundig (left). Richard and his wife, Kristine, sourced the pendants from Craigslist, then had them plated in copper. The appliances are by Viking, and the bar stools are Real Good chairs by Blu Dot. Continuing



the material palette, the back patio is furnished with a custom granite-and-steel table and vintage Eames fiberglass chairs (above). It's accessed from the master bedroom via a large pivot door (opposite). The bed and mirror are from Crate and Barrel; the pendant is from Droog. The couple made the wall sconces themselves.

**Cars and residences both serve as shelter, albeit at vastly differing degrees of scale—and commitment.** “Let’s say you want to drive a Ferrari. You reason, ‘Okay, it’s not going to be that comfortable, but it’s worth it,’” says Richard Kim, the head of design at electric car company Faraday Future. “That’s the high heel of cars. Homes are different. A home has to be comfortable, because, ultimately, it’s your safety zone.”

It’s that kind of thinking that drove Richard to design his own home, where he lives with his wife, Kristine Arellano, in the Silver Lake neighborhood of Los Angeles. Set far back from the street on a 7,500-square-foot lot, the two-bedroom home was the culmination of a trying, half-decade-long saga, and the first architectural project for Richard, who had previously created showroom concepts but never before realized an entire building. He acquired the property, then in a dilapidated state, in late 2007, shortly before the global economic downturn.

“Construction took five years because I kept running out of money and I couldn’t get a loan; I was

doing the house paycheck to paycheck,” he recalls. “And because I’m the crazy creative type, I was changing the design every two months.” Factor in falling home prices and sporadic electricity, and Richard’s game plan began to read like a manual of construction don’ts. “Sometimes we’d go an entire month without hot water,” he recalls. “That was the true test of a relationship, when you don’t have hot water or a kitchen.”

Fortunately, the tide turned, the home was eventually completed, and the couple were able to move out of their temporary setup in the partially finished basement, which now houses Presshaus LA, Kristine’s design and letterpress studio.

Richard took a largely carte blanche approach to the structure, a former church that had been converted into a single-family home in the 1950s. The one exception was a wall on the northwest-facing side, which he left intact in order to remain grandfathered into earlier zoning that permitted the house to be deeply set back from the street. The property’s setback informed its height allowance, which in turn defined its wholly >

“The process was so brutal that, without exaggeration, I now feel like I can do anything. It was a real test of character.”

—Richard Kim, designer and resident





“In automotive design, we say a car needs ‘more 3D’ or has ‘too much 3D’ to refer to the amount of light and shadow created by form. I wanted the house to have that same sort of play of light and shadow.” —Richard Kim



A love of midcentury design marks the couple's choice of living room furnishings, which include an Eames lounge chair and a Noguchi coffee table, paired with a sofa from HD Buttercup. The arching neck of the Prouvé Potence sconce mirrors the home's exterior form, while the large Fleetwood sliding door extends the space to the outdoors.



Richard eschews the modernist box, instead using faceted, angular edges to form a collage of polyhedral volumes (below). Opposite, clockwise from top left: Kristine climbs out onto the concrete-tile roof deck through a hatch door in the upstairs loft. The home's deep setback from the street means the couple can leave the large windows undressed to maximize light throughout the day; the loft is furnished with a Modernica rocking chair and custom casework by Dan Taron. A Case Study bed and Nelson ball lamp make for a cozy nook in the guest room, which has a private outdoor patio. White walls and black steel window frames serve to accentuate the home's unique geometry.



unique shape. “The older part that remained is lower set,” he explains, “But everywhere the structure is new, it gets bigger, taller, more dramatic.” The result is a curvilinear composition that follows the concept of Coke-bottle styling—a term used in automotive design to describe a contoured body with dynamic sightlines. Acting as lead designer, Richard worked with structural engineer Salvador A. Pineda and contractor Jerry Martinez to ensure the plans were up to code. Though the home is shaped by Richard’s expertise in smart cars and includes a few smart devices—thermostat and security camera systems from Nest, wi-fi-powered Sonos speakers, and an Amazon Echo—the home remains relatively analog. Previously on the founding team of BMWi, a division of BMW focused on sustainable mobility, where he served as the lead exterior designer for the electric i3 and hybrid i8 and i8 Spyder concept cars, Richard was drawn to work with electric cars because they’re “much more about architectural functionality,” he says. In place of a drivetrain, which accounts for the “hump” inside most cars, he explains, electric cars have batteries stacked flat beneath their bodies, allowing for “the opportunity to do a shape that really follows function.” Ironically, Richard’s interior layout of the home was in need of some functional upgrades, at least at first. “It was a dude’s home,” he jokes. As soon as Kristine got involved in the design, she immediately picked up on a few basic needs that his initial plan lacked: bigger closets, doors that didn’t open into one another, a larger kitchen, and a laundry room. “Everything created great flow,” he says of her decisions. Other aspects, however, were non-negotiable—namely, a nod to midcentury architect Richard Neutra’s masterful ability to connect indoor and outdoor spaces. “I wanted to be able to access the outside from every room,” he says. “No matter where you stand, you can see outside or be outside. You actually see through

the house.” A large, svelte Fleetwood door on the ground floor tucks away into the wall and out of view, extending the living room into the patio. Material choices—black-stained cedar and Cor-Ten on the exterior, and black tile flooring and white plaster walls for the interiors—were inspired by the work of architect Tom Kundig, whose designs “blend into the environment, with a sense of honesty,” says Richard, who also looked to the work of Tadao Ando and Toyo Ito. “These architects are iconic; anyone can turn away and draw their buildings in five seconds.” Despite having sworn to his wife that he would never work on a house again, Richard dares to suggest that the final structure was always intended to be used as a guest house, and that he plans to build another home directly in front of it. “I’ll design it to be more functional and reasonable...and understated,” he says, capriciously. “It’s a very expensive problem to have, but I’m okay with that. I’ve accepted that.” □

ILLUSTRATION BY JASON LEE

