

**MANSION GLOBAL**

## Mansion at ‘Intersection of Art and Science’ Hits Market in Venice, California

The unusual home, with a roof that reflects the color of the sky, has a \$5.5 million asking price

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*HALTON PARDEE + PARTNERS*

As the sky over Venice, California, changes color, so does the roof over Preston House, the latest home by architect Mario Romano, where hundreds of custom-cut aluminum strips reflect and distort the surrounding environment.

Mr. Romano's 5,700-square-foot creation is part of a triptych of unusual homes in Venice that rely on computer algorithms to turn the complicated, organic shapes the architect imagined into functional buildings. The six-bedroom, five-bathroom home will hit the market Thursday for \$5.5 million with Halton Pardee + Partners.

"It's really the intersection of art and science," Mr. Romano said. "None of this could be done without the power of computer processing that helps build and rebuild."

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Both an artist and an architect, Mr. Romano also drew inspiration from an iconic print called "The Great Wave off Kanagawa," by Katsushika Hokusai, which is currently at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. The 19th century Japanese print shows violent blue waves crashing over rowboats.

At any given time, the sky over Preston House colors the building in the same tones of blues, greys and neutrals as Hokusai's print.



Mario Romano stands on the roof of Preston House.

*Halton Pardee + Partners*

“At certain points of the day, it’s almost as if the roof falls out of the sky,” Mr. Romano said. “You get this appearance of something really painterly.”

Another interesting material included in the home is Simowood, a wood-like material made from compressed rice husks, which Mr. Romano used on the front of the home and in the custom floors.

The home is one of three unique houses designed by Mr. Romano in Venice. One, dubbed “The Wave,” has more than 300 custom-cut aluminum pieces that form a similar organic, asymmetrical exterior; it went on the market in August for \$5.497 million. A curved structure composes the other house, made from vertical strips in varying shades of black aluminum.

In each of these homes, Mr. Romano employed the kind of computer-aided, pattern-based architecture, known as parametric design, seen in mega-

projects by starchitects, such as Bjarke Ingels' pyramid-shaped VIA 57 West in Manhattan or Zaha Hadid's Wangjing SOHO office complex in Beijing.

It's parametric design "but distilled down to residential," Mr. Romano said.

His emphasis on technology-driven design is not out of context in Venice. Technology startups and software companies, from Snapchat to Hulu, have flooded the area, including Santa Monica, and driven the luxury market there.

The average sales price in Venice has jumped more than 20% in the past year, to \$2.439 million thanks to larger home sales, according to Miller Samuel's latest report on the market.

Despite the large pool of tech industry home buyers, Mr. Romano says that's not what drives his design. He imagines a much more traditional end user than his avant-garde homes might imply: The family.

"I'm a family man and it's family first that's the overall driving focus," said Mr. Romano. "The big backyard, (all the bedrooms are) upstairs, and the kitchen's in the heart, those are core values."

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