

ULTIMATE
ESCAPES

LAKESIDE SPA

A private spa on the edge of Montana's Whitefish Lake celebrates the serenity of the waterfront and the simplicity of Japanese bathhouses



STORY BY **HILARY MASELL OSWALD** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **AUDREY HALL**

THIS GORGEOUS SWATH of land above Montana's Whitefish Lake inspired its owners to create a building devoted to the art of introspection. And so the design team—Susie Hoffmann of Envi Interior Design Studio and David Koel of CTA Architects Engineers, in collaboration with the client—created a contemporary 3,000-square-foot space that houses an art gallery, gym, Japanese soaking tub and lap pool, all sheltered in a glass box that glows like a beacon on the hillside.



JAPANESE BATHHOUSES inspired the owners' vision for this space, but the design team wanted the building to feel connected to the local landscape as well. The 75-foot-long lap pool's teak surround subtly mimics the docks that line the shore, and the pool's finish material—Pebble Tec—is a dark color that resembles the lake water. The woven chairs are by Isamu Noguchi, and the paper-lantern chandelier is from Ingo Maurer.

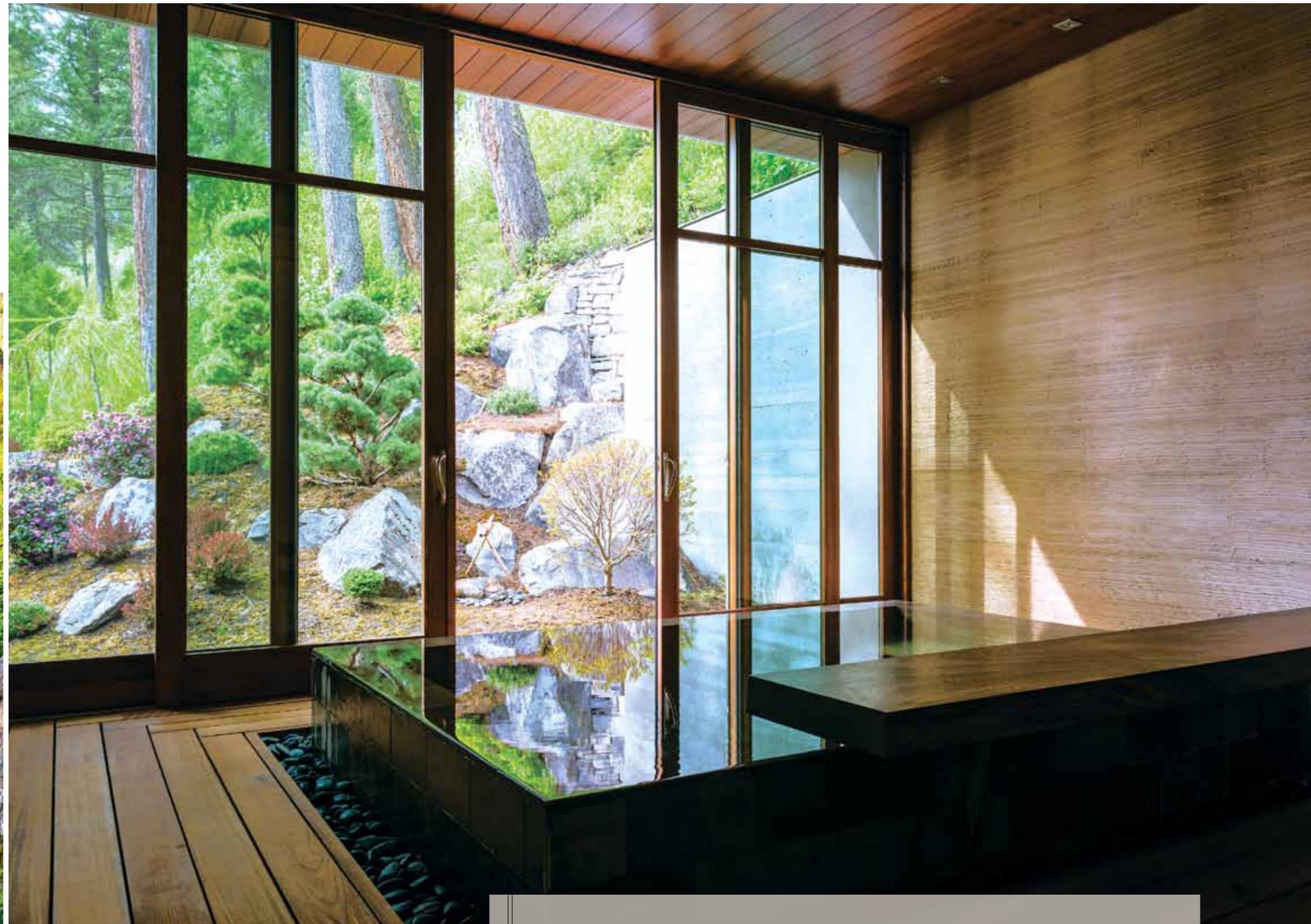
THE POOL'S INFINITY EDGE "is designed to make you feel like you're part of the lake," says Hoffmann, who paid careful attention to the ways in which the owners and their guests would experience the building. The slatted ceiling above the pool has custom lighting between the planks, creating a pattern that mirrors the pool's shape and gives visual cues about the edges, helpful when a swimmer is backstroking. The steps—leading from the pool deck up to the teak surround, and from the surround to the dressing area (not pictured) on the right—are "subtle cues that you're moving into a different part of the experience," Hoffmann explains. >>

“ MORE IMPORTANT THAN HOW IT LOOKS IS HOW IT FEELS.
YOU REALLY GET THAT SENSE OF RELAXATION AND WELLNESS. ”

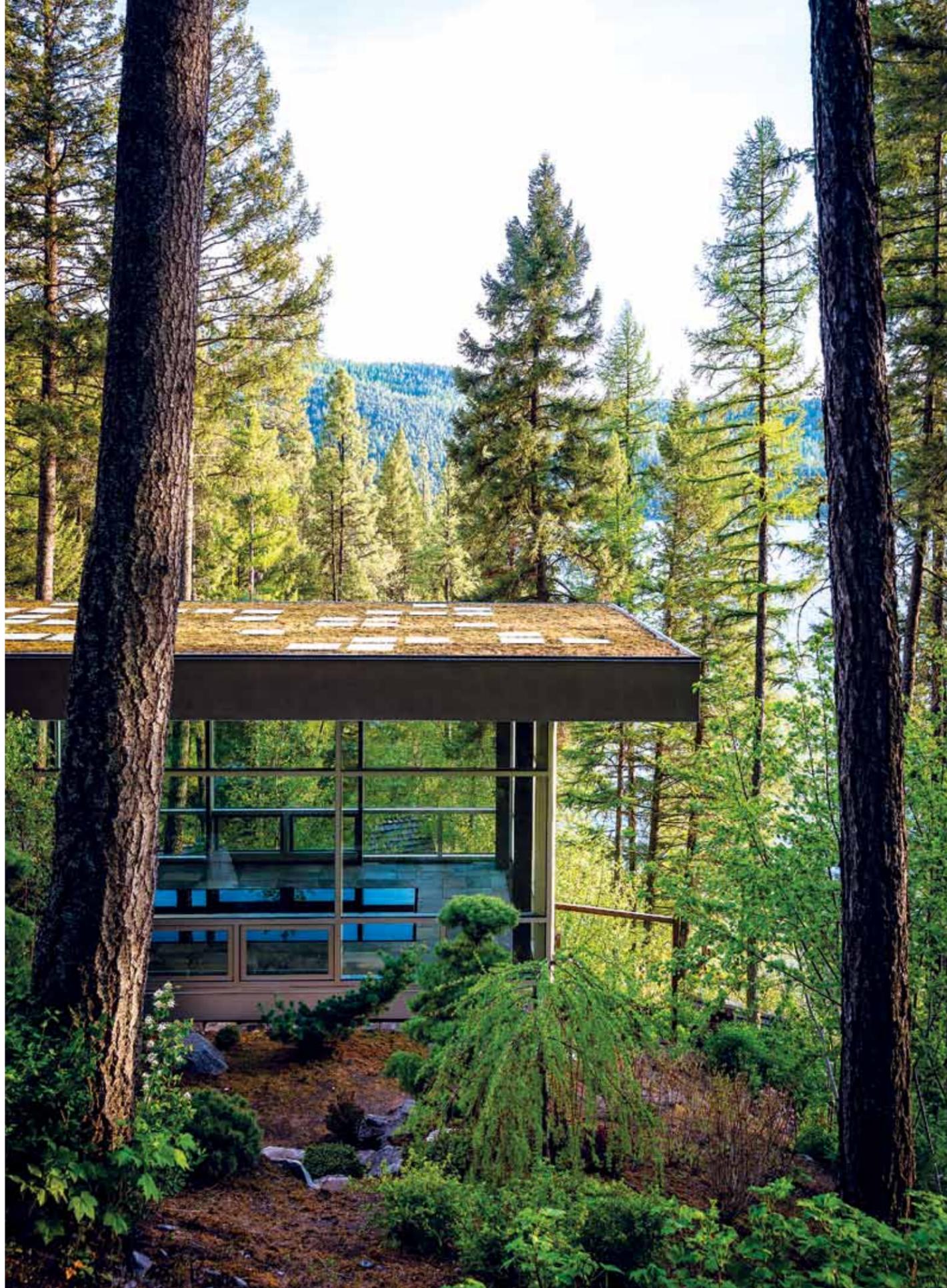
Susie Hoffmann



THE MAIN APPROACH to the building feels natural and earthy with lush landscaping and thoughtful rockwork. Koel attempted to marry the structure with the natural landscape by allowing its forms to “tumble down the hillside.” The pitched roof portions of the building are a nod toward the other rustic structures on the site, while the flat-roofed portion is “an intentional effort to contrast with tradition, and with the geometry of the landscape,” the architect explains.



THE JAPANESE SOAKING TUB is a serene combination of Eastern style and Western landscape. “The idea is that you open these glass doors and feel as though you’re outside,” Hoffmann says. To set the mood, landscape designer Chris Moritz adorned the adjacent Japanese-inspired garden with sculptural trees and plants, many of which are native to Montana. Inside, the design of the soaking tub pays tribute to Japanese bathhouses with authentic details: The overflow of water empties onto the smooth river stones that surround the tub, and the zigzag intersection of teak floor planks is patterned after the flooring found in the bathhouses the clients so admire. >>

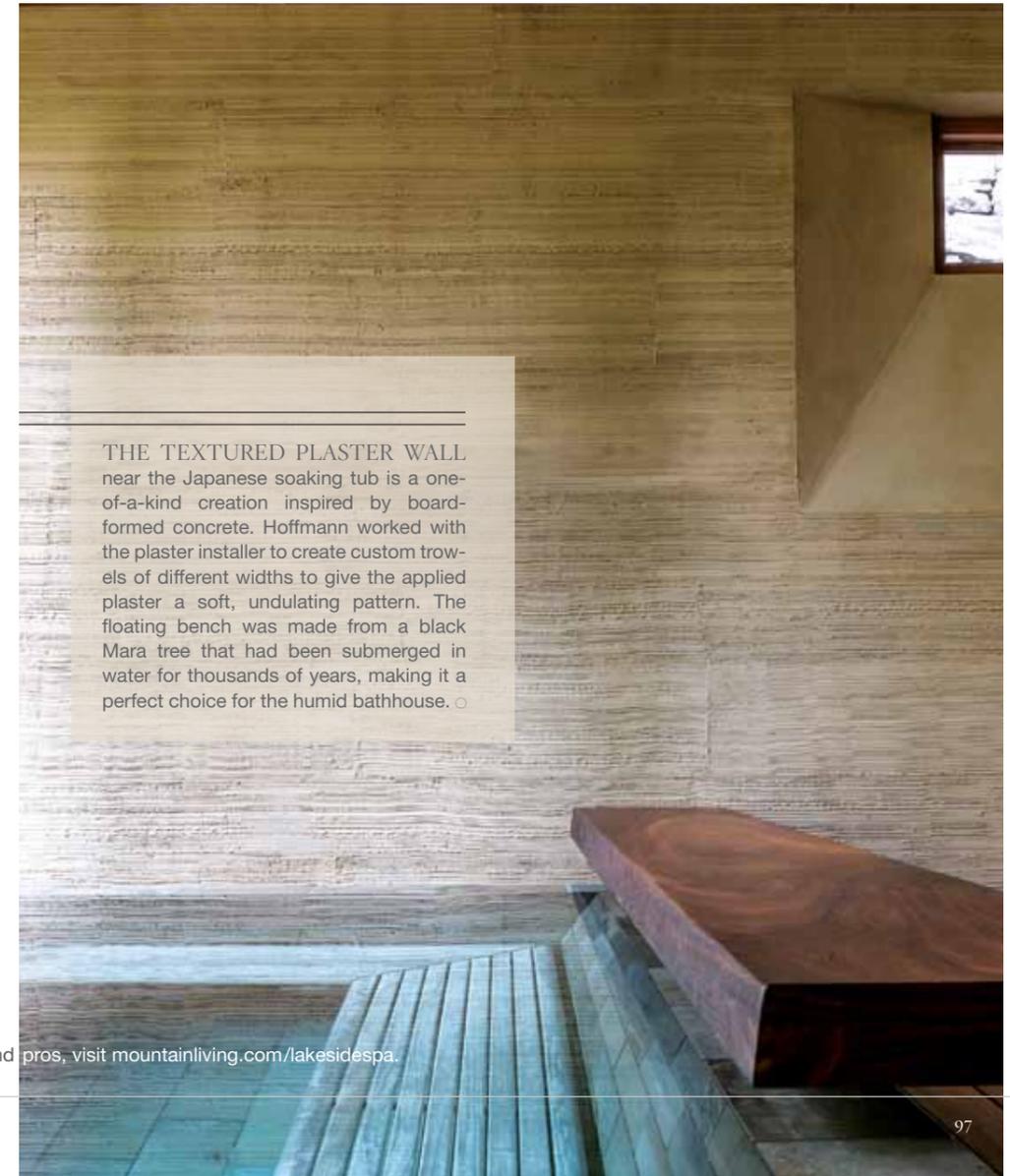


THE WOODED PROPERTY comprises a stretch of land that extends all the way to the lake. The main house sits near the tip of the property, while the spa building is farther up the hill. "The architect, in collaboration with the client, did a beautiful job of artfully blending the structure with the other buildings on the property, as well as the natural landscape," Hoffmann says.

A MOSS GARDEN on the pool house roof marries locally quarried limestone with a traditional Japanese step pattern. "I love that the thick slab of a roof appears to be defying gravity," Koel says. "You don't feel like the glass should be able to hold it up, and that gives the structure a kind of magical effect." The soft yellow-green mosses allow the bold, rigid structure to blend in with the lush surroundings. The clients can access the garden from the workout area, which offers magnificent views to the south and west.



THE TEXTURED PLASTER WALL near the Japanese soaking tub is a one-of-a-kind creation inspired by board-formed concrete. Hoffmann worked with the plaster installer to create custom trowels of different widths to give the applied plaster a soft, undulating pattern. The floating bench was made from a black Mara tree that had been submerged in water for thousands of years, making it a perfect choice for the humid bathhouse. ○



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