



\$185 Million
A 35,000-sq.-ft. estate with an olive grove lists in Bel-Air. **M2**

MANSION

\$75 Million
Condo to sell for a hefty profit on NYC's Billionaires' Row. **M3**



HOMES | MARKETS | PEOPLE | REDOS | SALES

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Friday, May 26, 2023 | **M1**

The Architect Celebrities Are Begging to Work With

The 81-year-old Japanese architect Tadao Ando has developed a cult following among the likes of Beyoncé, Jay-Z, Kanye West and Kim Kardashian. 'It was like working with God.'



Beyoncé and Jay-Z recently bought this Tadao Ando-designed home in Malibu, Calif.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: FLORIAN HOLZHERR/WHY; DONATO SARDELLA/GETTY IMAGES; LUC CASTEL/GETTY IMAGES; IAN WEST/PA/ZUMA PRESS; MIKE KELLEY BEL-AIR; DOROTHY HONG FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (NYC)

BY KATHERINE CLARKE
AND E.B. SOLOMONT

These days, the hottest must-have among the super wealthy isn't an Hermès purse, a designer Doodle dog or even Ozempic.

It is a concrete home designed by an 81-year-old Japanese architect.

Celebrities like Beyoncé, Jay-Z, Kanye West and Kim Kardashian are flocking to homes designed by Tadao Ando, a self-taught, Osaka-based architect. Ando's homes aren't just rare, but also affordable only for the very rich: Numbering fewer than 20 in the U.S., they are generally defined by their use of reinforced architectural concrete, which makes construction far more expensive than in typical homes. Clients must also be willing to go to great lengths to bring his vision to life.

In recent years, Ando has developed something of a cult following, with his devotees describing him in ethereal terms: master, poet, genius, icon. They travel to Japan for an audience with the Pritzker Prize winner, and beg him to design their homes.

"It was like working with God," said Leonard Steinberg, a real-estate agent with Compass in New York, who worked on sales at 152



Beyoncé and Jay-Z, above, bought the Malibu home from Bill and Maria Bell, top right. Tadao Ando, at right, was born in Osaka, Japan, in 1941. He won the Pritzker Prize in 1995.



APPROX.
\$200 MILLION
42,000 sq. ft.,
6 bedrooms

Elizabeth Street, a boutique condominium designed by Ando in the mid-2010s. "There was definitely a sense that we were dealing with an iconic figure of our time."

A recent string of megadeals has brought Ando's work into the spotlight and dramatically driven up prices for his homes, according to industry insiders. Most recently, Beyoncé and Jay-Z paid about \$200 million for an oceanfront Ando-designed mansion in Malibu, Calif., according to people familiar with the sale. The blufftop house, measuring about 42,000 square feet, was designed by Ando for prominent art collectors Bill and Maria Bell, who spent a dozen years constructing what Maria Bell said is a "sculpture as much as it is a building."

The deal, which closed May 22, set a record for the highest price ever paid for a home in California. Jay-Z and Beyoncé didn't respond to requests for comment.

They weren't the first celebrities to eye the house. West, now known as Ye, was planning on purchasing it for an even higher price last year, before his erratic behavior and antisemitic comments derailed his earnings, according to people familiar with the situation. West

Please turn to page M4

When Cookie-Cutter Doesn't Cut It

A North Carolina couple built a modern cantilevered house in a traditional suburban community. The design helped transform the landscape of their neighborhood.

BY NANCY KEATES

DORLISA FLUR WAS living in a cookie-cutter house in a suburban subdivision when, as a member of a cultural facilities board, she helped oversee the creation of the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art in Charlotte, N.C.: a rust-colored, terracotta tiled, cubed and cantilevered building designed by Swiss modernist Mario Botta.

Her exposure to Botta's architecture changed the course of her life. She and her husband Peter Flur went on to build a roughly 5,300-square-foot, three-bedroom, four-bathroom, cantilevered modern house on 5 acres along a lake just outside Charlotte. The house took three years and more than \$2 million to build, finishing in February 2022.

"Neither of us knew anything about modern art or architecture," says Dorlisa Flur, 58, a former McKinsey principal who is a



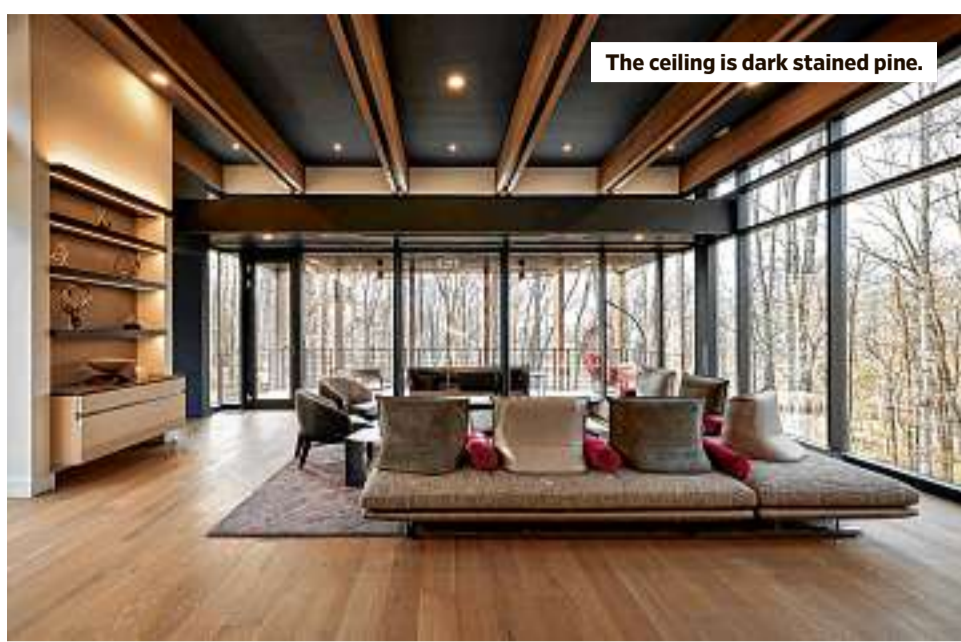
Dorlisa and Peter Flur spent three years building a 5,300-square-foot house just outside Charlotte, N.C.

corporate director and strategist. "We had no clue what we were getting into," says Peter Flur, also 58, who started a software company.

The Flurs' new house, in turn, has helped transform the architecture of their neighborhood, a private development called The Sanctuary at Lake Wylie, a man-made reservoir with portions in both North and South Carolina. Before they built their home, the

Please turn to page M6

MANSION



The ceiling is dark stained pine.



The design for the couple's three-bedroom, four-bathroom house was approved because it fit within its surroundings; it is set on top of stone walls carved into the hill.

A Shift To Modern

Continued from page M1
Sanctuary had allowed only traditional homes in Manor, Compound and Retreat styles, and most of the some 100 homes in the development are what owners there describe as French Country. These homes range in size from around 4,000 square feet to 14,000 square feet and have sold in the past for between \$850,000 and \$5 million.

As a result of the Flurs' project, the homeowners' association recently added a category to its design guidelines called The Organic Home—illustrated by a photo of the Flurs' house. An "organic home" means the house fits into its surroundings, says Dave Chapelle, who was head of the Sanctuary HOA's design committee when the Flurs first submitted their architect's design. He says that in the past the committee had requests for modern homes, but they tended to be glaringly different—white boxes or commercial looking. The Flurs' house blended into its site, and it allowed the development to widen its criteria, he says. The approval process for the couple's home was complex, with lots of discussion about the design goals, the setbacks, materials and colors, but he says the overall consensus was that their house fit in well with the community.

To carry out their modern aspirations, the Flurs hired Toby Witte, principal of Wittehaus, an architectural firm based in Charlotte. The couple had seen photos in a newspaper of the home Witte built for his own family in 2017. Witte,



Cost to build
\$2 MILLION

Cost of 5-acre lot
\$400,000



Fir beams go from inside to outside and stick off the side of the house.



The center of the house, on the main floor, is a music room, with a piano. A floating staircase leads down to a guest wing; vertical room-high metal rods serve as balustrades.

who is German, focuses on what he calls European-style modernism, with an emphasis on sustainability, and says Botta's work was "part of my upbringing." Witte works to counter what he sees as "a sea of heartless, uninspired



The rooms cantilever over the hill that slopes down to the lake.



houses provided to North American homeowners," he says in his book "Supersizing Bliss."

The Flurs' house is set on top of stone walls carved into the hill. The rooms cantilever over the hill that slopes down to the lake, creating a feeling of floating. Like the Bechtler, it is cubed, and it shares some of the same materials and fixtures, but it is a completely original design, with gray stucco boxes connected by a breezeway. Fir beams, which go from inside to outside, stick off the side. "It's more deconstructed than modular," says Geri Cruickshank Eaker, of Freespace Design, which designed the interiors and describes itself as a Euro-Modern interior design agency in Charlotte.

A glass doorway and glass on the other side of

the entryway give views of the swimming pool and the lake below. The ceiling, in both inside and outside spaces, is dark stained pine. Some floors are ceramic tile. The cen-

ter of the house, on the main floor, is a music room, with a piano and pocket doors. There is a floating staircase down to a guest wing on the lower floor, with screens of vertical room-high metal rods serv-



An inspiration for the house was the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art, designed by Swiss architect Mario Botta, above.

ing as balustrades. A main room with 14-foot ceilings holds the kitchen, dining and living rooms. At one end is a balcony with a porch overlooking the lake.

The house is almost net zero, meaning it produces almost as much energy as it uses during the year. It has solar panels, high performance German-engineered windows, spray foam insulation and air tight construction. Though the lot is 5 acres, the HOA rules allowed them to clear only about an acre, most of which was covered in underbrush and trees. The topography, combined with the complexity of the design, presented a civil engineering challenge, says Buddy Edwards, owner of Charlotte-based Lynn Luxury Homes, which built the house.

It helped that Edwards had built homes in the Sanctuary before and had a former client on the HOA's design committee. He and Witte worked together to meet the committee's technical requirements, such as the materials, and the visual imperative that the house not stick out (they used muted colors and set it back from the road).

The Flurs, who met as students at Duke University, moved to Charlotte from Atlanta in 2000, partly for her job at McKinsey and partly to be closer to family. Her parents lived in Siler City, N.C., where she grew up, and his parents had relocated to Cary, N.C.

They chose to live in an upscale suburb just south of the city called Ballantyne, known for its McMansions that look very much the same, because they saw it as a good place to raise their daughter, who is now 22. When they built that home, they chose a spec house plan; the only element they changed was that they didn't want brick, she says.

They had long dreamed about building a house by the ocean, but that changed after she took a job as chief strategy and transformation officer at Southeastern Grocers in Jacksonville, Fla., in 2016 and 2017. Both years she lived there, commuting home for weekends, Jacksonville experienced flooding and wind damage. "I saw how painful that was," she says.

The Flurs shifted their focus to lakes, and in 2018 they started looking at properties in the area, eventually paying \$400,000 for the lot along Lake Wylie. They told Witte how much they loved the Bechtler building and art and showed him some extremely modern homes they'd seen on a Netflix show. But they really didn't know exactly what they wanted: "We had this dream house inside of us. Toby got it out of us," she says.

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