

## ASK THE ARCHITECT: GRANT KIRKPATRICK

by Emily C. Laskowski • May 23, 2018



**The founder and principal of the Los Angeles-based architecture firm KAA Design knows how to create properties both primitive and pristine.**

When I discovered **Split Rock Ranch**, Grant Kirkpatrick's property backing Lake Nacimiento outside Paso Robles, California, I rocked back in my office swivel chair, stunned. Could this simple place, with a couple of 1,000 square-foot prefabricated cabins, its own septic tank, and a constructional façade of concrete and steel truly be the weekend getaway of a **contemporary architect** known for designing the celebrity homes of Matt Damon, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, and Rita Wilson and Tom Hanks?



When I interviewed Kirkpatrick for **Back to Basics** in our **May/June 2018** issue, we spoke at length about our shared yearning for the simple things in life. Similar to the sprawling haunts that Kirkpatrick designs for his clients, we often write in each issue about mammoth properties in locales from Santa Fe to Jackson Hole. Yet, Kirkpatrick's own family retreat shies away in many aspects from his esteemed professional aesthetic—and we share countless stories of a Western frontier that once looked very different from the homes we feature. When I think about what comprised a ranch or farm 100 years ago, I'm struck by the vast shift in architectural and design choices between then and now.





Kirkpatrick concedes that keeping one's eyes fixed toward economy, instead of extravagance, is no easy task. "If we had our druthers, would we have built something larger there? I have no doubt," he says about Split Rock Ranch. "But, I think the key advantage is just the capture time in a relatively small, but good-feeling space ... space that feels right for a family."



Now knowing Kirkpatrick's mastery of the frugal as well as the fabulous, I asked him to share some of his personal thoughts on style and design:

**Go-to landscape improvement:** Light fixtures dangling from a tree.

**Trend to try in 2018:** Simplicity! Takes years to hone this skill...

**Trend to say bye to in 2018:** Complicated smart home systems.

**Style mantra:** Timelessness.

**Favorite room of the house:** The covered outdoor room—Lanai, Palapa, Loggia, or covered terrace with fireplace and TV.

**Where to save:** Making every surface a "got to have" surface. Let some materials set the stage and one to be the protagonist.

**Where to splurge:** On that one great material.

**Design inspiration:** Exposed structural materials.

**Favorite element of classic Western design:** Grain. The grain of woods, stone, formed concrete. Letting nature be the texture.

**Book on your coffee table right now (I'm guessing *California Contemporary*...):** It is! In fact I just read it for the first time cover to cover. I was nervous, but it works—whew! The other book is Tom Kundig's latest. Big fan.



Learn more about Split Rock Ranch and the work of Grant Kirkpatrick in *California Contemporary: The Houses of Grant C. Kirkpatrick and KAA Design*, available May 1 (\$55). Photography (from top): Tower Grove by Manolo Langis, Split Rock Ranch by Lisa Romerein, Longfellow Drive by Sharon Risedorff, 3rd & The Strand by Roger Davies. All images courtesy KAA Design Group.