

## A Dull Stucco Home Becomes a Modern California Oasis

WRITTEN BY: [EMMA JANZEN](#) PHOTOS BY: [JIM BRADY](#) AUGUST 12, 2015

Christian Rice Architects transformed a Spanish-style dud into a lofty, contemporary gem.



In order to transform the structure from its original state to something more modern, Rice and his team stripped away the existing Spanish-style roof and selected clean new stucco to create a blank canvas to work from. He calls the new facade a “study in composition,” with windows punched out from the walls in geometric patterns and corrugated metal sheets weaved into the overall theme to add a distinctly urban feel.

Photo by [Jim Brady](#)

Located in the eclectic Hillcrest neighborhood of San Diego, the Georgia St. Residence was originally an uninspired Spanish-style two-story home that “felt like something you’d see in a Western ghost town; a facade decoration with nothing behind it,” architect Christian Rice says. Rice’s client desired something more contemporary, with bright, bold colors and a stronger connection to the outside spaces.

Taking inspiration from the repurposed shipping container trend and loft-style aesthetics, Rice and his team transformed the stucco box into an airy, modern home that fits perfectly into the neighborhood. An entryway reflecting pond, outdoor dining area, rooftop patios, and large backyard pool were also added to create a larger, more dynamic property. “I love the way we were able to take a really nondescript box and give it so much energy and life,” Rice says.

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What was once a dull asphalt driveway with sporadic, overgrown foliage was morphed into a large, welcoming social area in the front entryway. A [reflecting pool](#) was carved out of the earth. Extensive [landscaping](#) makes the area more appealing to visitors. The corrugated metal used on the facade—a nod to the owner's original desire to use repurposed shipping containers—was painted electric green underneath the [cantilevered](#) front porch roof, and blue for the side fencing that surrounds an outdoor dining area, to keep the color palette upbeat and fun.

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The main living room, located near the front door, features a striking two-story glass garage door that opens the interior spaces to the outdoor dining area. The original house was very dark, so the new plans involved as many windows as possible to break down the barriers between the indoor and outdoor spaces. “Even when [the garage door] is closed, it’s still very bright and helps open the house to the outdoors,” Rice says. “It was basically an easy way to eliminate a wall entirely.”

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The owner wanted an interior scheme that felt loft-like, so Rice and his team carved out the double-height space from the second floor to create the entryway aviary. The garage door feature adds urban grit to the space. “We made it seem less like an actual garage door and more like a panel that just slides straight up,” Rice says.

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The outdoor space located just beyond the garage door acts as an [outdoor dining](#) area. The cantilevered roof from the front of the building angles to [cover](#) this space, with recessed heaters embedded into the metal. Local artist Nate Schnell, a friend of the client, designed the mural. “Side yards tend to be leftover space, but this one had a width that presented a great opportunity to repurpose the space,” Rice says. “It makes the whole house feel so much bigger because it doesn’t just stop at that garage wall. The perception goes all the way to the property line.”

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One of the client's main requests for the home was a large pool to replace the existing asphalt backyard. Artist Nate Schnell painted a second mural in this area to add color and energy.

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Loft-like features are used throughout the first floor interior space, including raw polished [concrete floors](#), exposed beams (one of the few elements of the existing home that were preserved), and diamond-plate steel cladding on the floating [staircase](#).

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The first floor follows an open scheme, with an unusual staircase configuration that helps keep the room open and clean on the first floor.

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The staircase leads from the living room to an exterior balcony, where a second [spiral staircase](#) leading to the rooftop [balcony](#) was painted bright tangerine [orange](#). The roof deck spans the entire footprint of the home.

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In addition to a [rooftop patio](#), the second floor also features a private balcony space.

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