

# LOOSE TENSION

*A Vancouver residence revives the art of sculptural landscape with both razor-sharp precision and artistic flair.*

Written by DEBRA PRINZING

TIM SWANKY (THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE)

The tension conveyed through *Critical Mass*, David Robinson's bronze-and-Cor-Ten work, gives a Vancouver landscape a dynamic quality. **OPPOSITE:** A bank planted with one dozen paper bark maple trees screens the home and garden. The trees' cinnamon-hued trunks, which peel like sheets of paper, interact with the weathered patina of the sculpture, subtly connecting the work with Paul Sangha's landscape design. »





Two additional pieces by David Robinson are mounted on the vertical retaining wall that contains the infinity pool, depicting male and female rowers in sculls.

“Landscape as sculpture,” a notion rooted in the 18th-century earth-shaping style of English garden designer Capability Brown, is updated in a thoroughly modern way in a garden in Vancouver’s Point Grey neighborhood. Here landscape architect Paul Sangha utilized specimen trees, pools of water, and basalt to reflect the natural world and shape a steep, narrow 66-by-168-foot city lot into a work of art.

The client tapped project designer Chris Doray to design the home, which has ample glass yet plenty of privacy. Sangha and his team worked closely with Doray to plan a landscape around the rectilinear limestone-clad structure, contrasting its crisp lines with an organic yet restrained natural setting. “I wanted a loose, wild quality,” Sangha explains.

The house seems to hover on its podium-like footings above an 18-inch-deep pool, lined with dark basalt to enhance the water’s reflective qualities. “It creates a sense of expanse, drawing in the landscape and the house as well as the sky,” Sangha says.

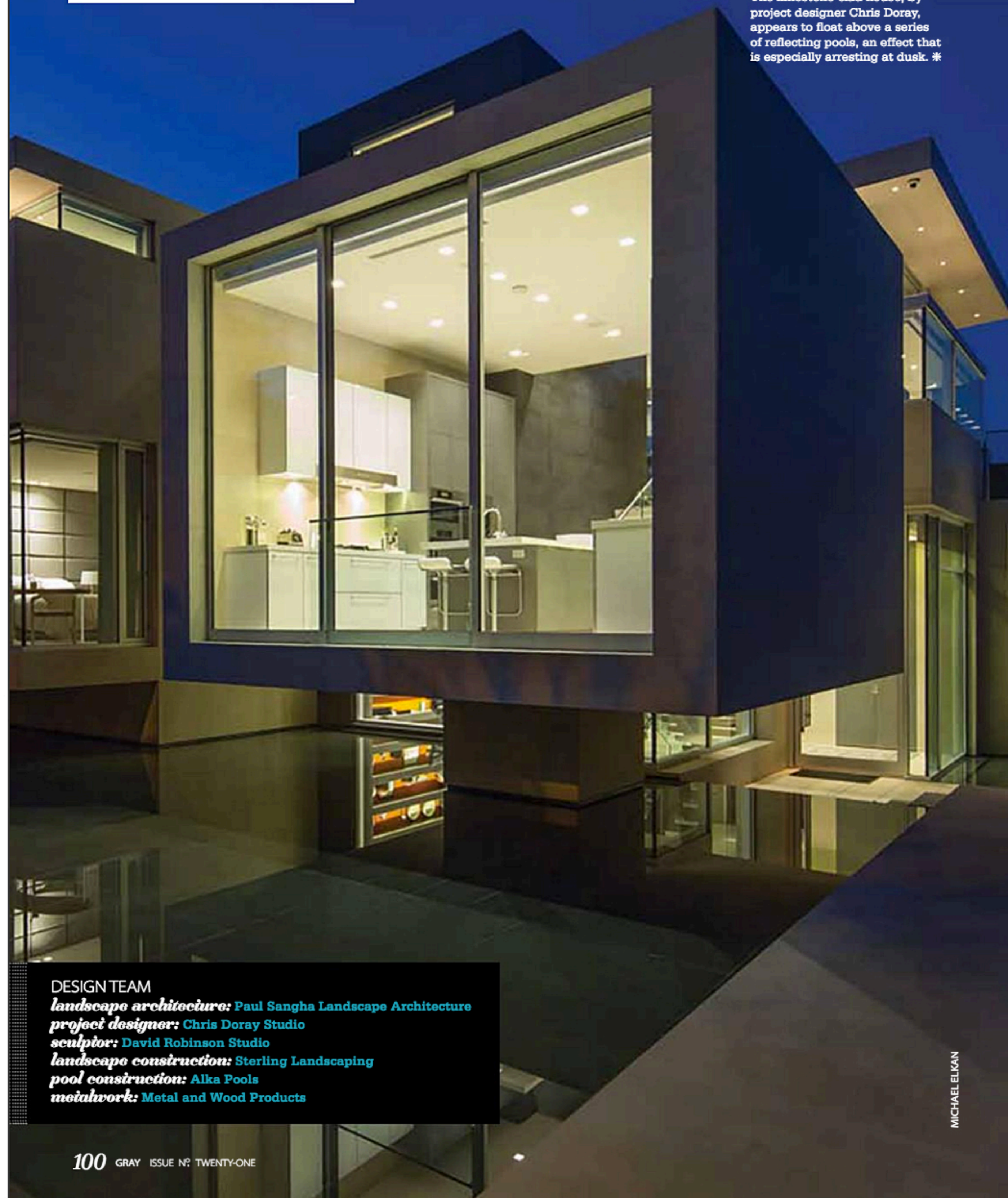
A curved steel arc cuts across the northwest side of the garden, containing an infinity-edge plunge pool and defining the edge of an entertainment terrace outfitted with a fire pit and bar. The curving line creates “necessary tension,” according

to Sangha. “The arc allows movement. I took it through the water and up onto the bank—it is the shape that most powerfully relieves the tension of the home’s cubist forms.”

On the southwest side of the property, Sangha wanted to commission a site-specific sculpture to integrate a larger water feature with the landscape. When the homeowner suggested Vancouver-based artist David Robinson, Sangha was delighted. “I’d wanted to work with David for a long time. Sculpture adds a wonderful layer to our projects; it becomes a story and incorporates someone else’s aesthetic and intuitions.”

*Critical Mass*, Robinson’s dynamic bronze and Cor-Ten installation, holds its own against the volumes of water and architecture. The piece is 30 feet long and portrays a larger-than-life human figure resisting a falling row of 43 Cor-Ten “fins.” The tilting steel slabs are frozen in mid-tumble yet feel kinetic. The sculpture is carefully aligned with the home’s windows, so from the inside, they seem to frame the center of the arc and the figure. The weathered pieces interact with Sangha’s planting scheme of textured bark, lacy foliage, and evergreen boughs, creating a layered, ever-changing effect that’s compelling from any angle. »

PAUL SANGHA, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE



The limestone-clad house, by project designer Chris Doray, appears to float above a series of reflecting pools, an effect that is especially arresting at dusk. \*

**DESIGN TEAM**  
**landscape architecture:** Paul Sangha Landscape Architecture  
**project designer:** Chris Doray Studio  
**sculptor:** David Robinson Studio  
**landscape construction:** Sterling Landscaping  
**pool construction:** Alka Pools  
**metalwork:** Metal and Wood Products

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