

# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

VOICES

## A Day with Designer Tim Campbell

The disciplined creative balances myriad projects on two coasts

TEXT BY [HADLEY KELLER](#) · Posted February 19, 2018



Designer Tim Campbell.

Photo: Courtesy of Tim Campbell



Tim Campbell has an easy solution to that old maxim about there never being enough hours in the day: create more. The designer, who is based in Los Angeles but nearly splits his time between there and New York, juggles his numerous projects on both coasts with the discipline of a military sergeant: Mornings begin before sunrise, when a rigorous workout prepares him for a day's work. After hours of site visits, client meetings, and CAD work, he ends the day with a second workout. Campbell might be onto something with this whole mind/body balancing act; in his 12 years in practice, he's created an impressive roster of strikingly varied designs, from restorations on modernist gems to traditional family homes. It's all part of his philosophy that "every building has its own unique character" and his desire to reveal and highlight that character. Last year, he published his first book, *Intentional Beauty* (Pointed Leaf Press, \$75), which showcases the best of his projects. AD PRO shadowed Campbell for a day in Los Angeles.

**4:30 A.M.** My alarm is always set to 4:30 a.m., no matter what city I happen to be in. I'm naturally a morning person and my day always begins with a strong cup of coffee while reading a few emails in bed for 15 minutes.

**4:50 A.M.** I shave and dress for the gym. I have a committed morning workout routine with my trainer. Before I leave for the gym, however, my two pit bulls, Jack and Boss, insist on a quick morning walk around my Silverlake neighborhood. I'm out the door and headed to the gym by 5:30 am.



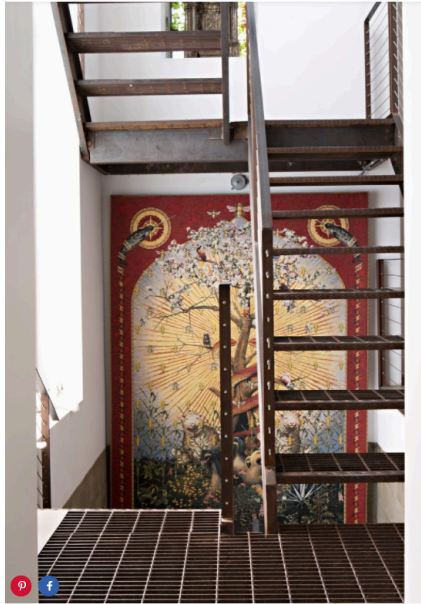
Richard Neutra's Singleton House, which Campbell renovated.

Photo: Andrew Bush

**6:00 A.M.** Personal trainers in L.A. and New York are like surrogate therapists. I can't live without mine. His name is John Petrelli, and I've been working with him for five years. We both train in jujitsu, so my morning workout sessions with him are geared toward cardio conditioning, core training, and flexibility. I find that an hour-long hard workout clears my mind each day and resets me creatively.

**7:30 A.M.** I'm a creature of habit, so each day's breakfast is the same. I love Norm's on La Cienega. It's nostalgic and a bit kitsch, and my waitress, Ruthie, always knows what I want without asking.

**8:00 A.M.** I'm in the car headed to my first job-site visit of the day. Today it's a new house in Brentwood Circle that I'm building for an entertainment client. I never cease to marvel at Sunset Boulevard being part of my daily commute. The hedges concealing the houses just beyond are negligees for some of the cities most stylish pads.



A staircase in a New York apartment by Campbell.

**8:45 A.M.** Arriving at my first job walk, I'm greeted by my contractor Gordon Rattigan. We've built or renovated upward of 20 homes for clients in L.A. Today the house is framed, and we are looking over window and door placement to make sure all the openings line up as planned. A quick talk with the electrician who's ready to prewire the house, and I'm off to my next job.

**10:00 A.M.** My next job is a prefab home in collaboration with Ray Kappe and Living Homes for another client. This one is sited on a bluff above the Pacific Ocean. We are about nine months in, and the house is nearing completion. I approve the pool's waterline tile and talk with the tile guy about grout colors.

**11:00 A.M.** Headed back toward West Hollywood to meet a business partner for lunch at Soho House (starting my day at 7 a.m. means lunch is closer to 11:30). In addition to designing homes for clients in L.A. and New York, three years ago I partnered with a real estate developer to build custom luxury homes in Los Angeles. TriWest has become one of the major players in the L.A. real estate development market, and together we currently have three homes under construction with several more on the horizon. Soho House is the perfect venue for this type of meeting, and I'm often to be found working there midday at one of the communal tables.



A model unit Campbell designed for the Printing House, a historic building in New York's West Village.

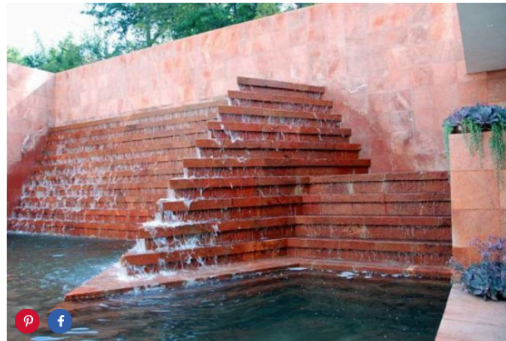
Photo: Karyn Millet

**1:00 P.M.** In my office for the first time today, I meet with my staff to review 3-D model studies for a new modern home we are designing in Beverly Hills just west of Trousdale Estates. My collaborative process with my team is pretty fluid and deep. I'll often draw the first pass of a new house while I'm flying. I'm as fluent with AutoCAD as I am with a pencil. Flying every other week to New York, it's definitely more efficient to lay out the plans in CAD. Often I'll hand over the draft to a senior designer on my team to "sculpt" the house. I may give them a few words or images to work with, and then I let go. I find it incredibly creatively satisfying to give birth to an idea and let the creative process among my team give it form.

**2:00 P.M.** I have a conference call with my team in New York on a project in the West Village. We are restoring an 1845 building for a Los Angeles client who will use it as his retail location in the city as well as a pied-à-terre. I find the design process in New York to be much more technical and challenging for reasons that differ from L.A., but I love it just the same.



A California home Campbell designed around an iconic Louis Barragán fountain.



The fountain.

Photo: Michael Locke

**3:00 P.M.** I head back to West Hollywood for a meeting with the city for one of the new small houses we are building just below Melrose near the Pacific Design Center. This neighborhood has become quite hot with the entertainment crowd, and we have three new single-family homes in the early stages of design and permitting. The city loves a more romantic vernacular, so we are doing styles that I'm less known for but secretly love.

**5:00 P.M.** My day usually winds down the way it starts—with a bit of physical training. I head to Gracie Jiu-Jitsu Academy on South Beverly Drive in Beverly Hills. I started training with the Gracie family a few years back. I find that an hour of technical training and sparring is a great way to dissipate the day's stress. It's a bit of an outlier culture, but it's where I feel most at home: on the mat going head to head with a fellow fighter.

**6:30 P.M.** Heading back east on Santa Monica Boulevard, I'll be back in Silverlake in about an hour. The drive home is a great way to unwind from a day of job-site meetings and design meetings.

**7:30 P.M.** Dinnertime at one of my favorite places, Barbrix in Silverlake. I meet my husband of 30 years, Steve, for a glass of wine and conversation.

**9:00 P.M.** Back home where it all started, just in time to walk my dogs, have an old fashioned, and head to bed. . . .