

Calendar

Many Mansions

Luxury Home Tour

What's the proper attitude to assume when you go on the Tour d'Elegance Luxury House Tour? Voyeuristic? Contemptuous? Agog? Five newly built houses in a Chula Vista neighborhood called "The Gates" are on view this time. Paul Tryon, chief economic officer of the Building Industry Association of San Diego County (a tour sponsor), describes The Gates as "a private enclave of 64 luxury lots within The Woods." (The five on exhibit are the only ones that have been built so far.) The Woods, in turn, is one

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of eight developments within 3200-acre EastLake, South Bay's oldest planned community (b. 1986).

The rooms do not echo. The houses were fully furnished by designers and can be purchased as such: "Turnkey," as Tryon expresses it. At the three previous Tour d'Elegances, people have bought them just that way. "Other times, they were bought, then stripped and reconstructed to a different look."

The gape-mouthed cannot speak. Gather yourself to ask questions. The answer to the price question is predictable, anyway. "The homes are purchasable in the range of mid-to-high \$2 millions to about \$3.5 million," Tryon says.

They appear to be selling. "One is under contract, and that was the only one offered for purchase prior to the opening of the event [on July 11]. The others are just now setting prices. There are active offers on a couple of the homes already that I'm aware of."

Pay attention to detail — and to the lingo. Note the 10½-foot Italian teak wood dining room table in the house that was inspired by rock star Sting's Tuscan farmhouse. Originally that table was a church door. The homage to Sting has four courtyards enclosed by "natural" stone and a "disappearing 12-foot glass door," a variation on Victorian pocket doors, except that even its threshold collapses and retracts. At 4761 square feet, it's the smallest house of the five. Still, it has a 47-foot-long family room and five individually designed fireplaces (one of them with a Biblical stone surround from ancient Israeli churches), as well as little things like a Russian shuttered window transformed into a mirror.

The second house, meant to resemble a hacienda, has a vanishing-edge pool that's 75 feet long. These pools, also called zero or "0" edge,



Eastlake home under construction

negative edge, disappearing edge, and no-edge pools, are designed to be aquatic optical illusions. One side appears to be a watery precipice that extends to the horizon. In actuality, the water is flowing into a hidden trough or structural wall, where it's recirculated.

Tryon doesn't know who invented the concept but estimates that these pool designs have been on the scene for six to eight years, popular in San Diego for the last four or five. "We have a lot of hills, and it works really well with that [topography]."

Irving Gill is said to have inspired the third house, built in the mission style. Gill was known for his symmetry, and, says Tryon, "This one plays out that way as well. You start out with the fountain in front of the house, and you can look all the way through the arched doorways, into the back yard, through the pool area, and there'll be a matching fountain on the other side. There are an even number of windows on either side of the door, and the enormous stone fireplaces on either side of the room are matching, too."

The mission-style house has a so-

called "floating roof." Tryon explains. "It's an architectural feature that gives the roof the appearance of being separate from the home." It's a visual gap, not a real one. There's also what's called a California mud room. As opposed to a New England mud room, a region where there really is a lot of mud? "Well, it combines a very spacious laundry facility with what Easterners would associate with the ability to come in and clean up. It will function much like a mud room would function in an adverse climate, but this one happens to be a very positive climate."

The fourth house is a contemporary Spanish villa with multiple courtyards, a tower featuring a massive hand-carved door, and a crocodile-embossed leather-topped dining table. There is a kind of symmetry at work here, too. The detached home office is combined with a "tech center." The butler's pantry has a "wine room."

The fifth and biggest house (8900 square feet, with 7½ baths) is the most unusual. "It's almost futuristic in some respects," says Tryon. "A lot of organic

materials — copper roofing, a lot of stone, a lot of glass." This one seems to do one better than all the other ones try. For example, its retractable, disappearing doors are curved. The curves are important: the house is said to have no corners. Is that true? A careful speaker, Tryon will commit only so far. "I can't recall a straight wall."

— Jeanne Schinto

The Sycuan Casino & Resort Tour d'Elegance Luxury Home Tour Through August 10, Tuesday-Thursday, 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. Friday-Sunday, 10:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m. The Gates at The Woods EastLake, Chula Vista Adults, \$12; children under 12, \$5; under 2, free; \$10, seniors on Wednesdays; \$8, groups of 25 or more. Childcare available weekends Info and directions: 619-835-9003 or www.tourluxuryhomes.com

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