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In a Oaxaca, Mexico beach town, a
sublime work of minimalist architecture by
LUDWIG GODEFROY explores the relationship
between the solid and the void.

CONCRETE JUNGLE

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On The Cover



**OAXACA, MEXICO
DESIGNED BY LUDWIG GODEFROY**

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LUDWIGGODEFROY.COM**

FEATURED ON PAGE 65

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SOUTH BAY History Tidbits

FRED ROESSLER

One name stands alongside that of Frank Vanderlip in the history of Palos Verdes Estates, and that is Fred Roessler. Frank Vanderlip is known as the Father of Palos Verdes, but Fred Roessler is the Father of the City of Palos Verdes Estates.

Hans Frederick Bernard Roessler, or Fred, as he preferred to be known, served for 25 years, from 1940 until his death in 1965, as the mayor of Palos Verdes Estates. He was the city's first mayor, taking office after leading the fight to incorporate that became successful in 1939. He was elected to the first city council, and its members voted him to be the city's first mayor.

After serving in the U.S. Army in France during World War I, Roessler settled in Los Angeles, where he married Edna Lucille Hansen in 1921. He and Edna first moved to the Peninsula in 1931 to a house in the Miraleste area.



Together, they helped Margaret Chadwick establish Chadwick School, contributing \$100,000 toward the project. The prestigious school opened in January 1938. Before then, Chadwick had been educating children, including those of the Roesslers, in her home.

The Roesslers moved to a house on Via Coronel in December

1937 in what would become Palos Verdes Estates. Roessler later recalled getting a phone call the very night they moved in asking him to help with the drive to incorporate PVE as a city.

After a bitter two-year struggle, the measure calling for incorporation passed on Dec. 9, 1939. 419 votes were cast, and the final tally was 213 for, and 206 against. Palos Verdes Estates officially became a city of the sixth class on Dec. 20, 1939.

During his tenure as mayor, the fiscally conservative Roessler kept the city on a tight leash, never once allowing it to go into debt with the issuance of municipal bonds.

He also fought to preserve the city's rural residential character, resisting the urge to build larger roads and add other elements found in the South Bay's more commercially developed areas. As a member and one-time president of the Palos Verdes Homes Association, he worked to limit business development and to keep the city's Spanish character, including requiring houses to have tile roofs.

Roessler had suffered from heart trouble for years, and had been hospitalized three times before suffering a fatal heart attack early in the morning of Jan. 30, 1965. He was 71.

The city never forgot its first mayor. A memorial fountain was dedicated to him at Palos Verdes Estates City Hall on Easter Sunday in 1968, where a bust of him also stands. The City also renamed the Palos Verdes Swim Club pool, opened in 1930, as Roessler Memorial Pool in April 1969.

The above is an excerpt from my book "Historic Tales of Palos Verdes and the South Bay". For more info see <http://www.southbayhistory.com>.



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CONCRETE JUNGLE

In a Oaxaca, Mexico beach town, a sublime work of minimalist architecture by **Ludwig Godefroy** explores the relationship between the solid and the void.



WRITTEN BY JENN THORNTON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAIME NAVARRO
(@JAIMENAVARROS_ESTUDIO) FOR CASA TO (@CASATO)



n peaceful La Punta Zicatela, located in the Mexican state of Oaxaca, Casa TO bathes not only in the golden sunsets of a surfer's paradise, but also in the glow of its standing as the most architecturally interesting boutique hotel in town. This cleverly abstracted concrete oasis by architect Ludwig Godefroy is a bold reinterpretation of an ancient Oaxacan temple, fusing tradition and modernity with seclusion and exposure for something not as much built as sculpted. Casa TO is hardly the country's first flirtation with concrete; Mexico's fidelity to the raw material calls to mind the work of beloved son Luis Barragán and Japan's Tadao Ando, whose concrete art campus Casa Wabi, another Oaxacan retreat, is a much-Instagrammed sensation. It is, however, plenty worthy of following—all the way to southernmost point of Puerto Escondido.



In designing the two-story boutique hotel—a hybrid of tradition and the avant-garde—one presumes that the French-born, Mexico-based Godefroy was at least partially motivated by what many of us have long considered: Does Mexico really need another discotheque-to-death megahotel? Manifestly no. Of modest scale, the architect's elegantly simple concept is a striking rethink for the by-the-beach hospitality scene: private and musing, with a pretty unforgettable pool and a bent toward eco-consciousness and social responsibility.



This is not a building found on every block—not in Mexico, not anywhere—but a building born from blended inspirations.

Taking its name from the idea of “serene contemplation of an enclosed space,” as put by the property, Casa TO “evokes the reticulated pattern of two historical hydraulic works of timeless beauty: the Basilica Cistern or Yerebatan Sarayi of Istanbul, dating from the 6th century AD, and the Hornsey Wood Reservoir in Finsbury Park, London, built in the 19th century. The interplay of privacy and exposure is evident. The interior views create an oasis enclosed by the sky, the weight of the walls and the vegetation of climbing plants and fruit trees including bananas and passion fruit. In this area, measuring 600 square meters, Godefroy interweaves aesthetics

and functionality, emphasizing the honesty of the textures of the raw materials, such as concrete, steel, clay, and wood.”

At its heart is the project’s covered infinity pool and solarium. “The former alludes to the vaulted volumes and the signature style of Le Corbusier with rectilinear lines, exposed loadbearing walls, lightweight structures, and open-plan interiors.” The divisions of the terraced solarium, meanwhile, provide privacy. An adjacent volume houses a modest but memorable offering of unfussy, minimally finished suites: those on the ground floor enjoy gardens; upper-level offerings showcase a terrace and outdoor bath. Transversal walls and circular cuts of raw concrete and temple-like steps—the most conspicuous nod to ancient Oaxacan building traditions—are



all defining features of the architecture. The latter element, a stairway to heaven no matter how one slices it, guiding guests from suite to water or suite to rooftop, also serves the more impromptu purpose of providing seating or a place to sunbathe.

The architecture flourishes when greenery is left to scale exterior walls and sheath exposures in a kind of picturesque privacy shield. As a form meets flora homage to its context, Casa TO trades on the tropical setting at every turn, embracing nature as a bridge between indoor and outdoor thresholds. Vibrant green vegetation against grey concrete revitalizes the eye even as it refreshes the spirit and also helps to soften the strong profile and hard edges of the architecture's heavier, more durable surfaces. The result is a living, thriving



environment—the most alluring expression of a concrete jungle.

Having beauty at its back door liberates the minimalist interior from superfluous oversteps. The sparse, open-plan interior design borrows—not extravagantly, and most noticeably in the natural tones of the materials and the nuanced use of yellow, blue, and green hues—from its naturally textured surround. A pattern of an existing Madagascar Blue Bismarck palm tree on the site, for example, informed the project's stripped-down decorative scheme, if “decorative” can be applied. A busier and less-localized interior might not draw the eye where it should be: on lamps by Natural Urbano studio, bamboo pieces by Tiago Solís Van Beuren, and furniture built by master carpenters from Puebla, Guadalajara, and Oaxaca.

Each element of Casa TO—from the work of artisans and Mexican design studios, to plant-infused products, to the setting itself—root the structure firmly to its place. Though the structure is soundly of its time, as well, even as one traverses the temple-inspired terrace steps and thoughts turn to Mexico's sky-high archaeological ruins. This is a temple, too—to honest, unambiguous contemporary architecture. A new dawn for a work inspired by an older age.

ludwigodefroy.com