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Frames of Reference

TEXT BY GUY TREBAY PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROGER DAVIES PRODUCED BY CARLOS MOTA



Below: Hotelier Jeff Klein (standing) and movie producer John Goldwyn enlisted Madeline Stuart & Assoc. to rework the interiors of their Hollywood Hills residence, which was built in 1951 by architect John Elgin Woolf. The home's gardens were originally conceived by Thomas Church and updated by Wade Graham Landscape Studio. **Left:** The living room is furnished with seating by Stuart, including a sofa covered in a Classic Cloth linen and lounge chairs in a fabric from Stark; the fringed throw is by Hermès. For details see Sources.



A handsome 1950s Los Angeles home with a fascinating Hollywood legacy is the perfect refuge for hotelier Jeff Klein and film producer John Goldwyn



Do people find houses? Or is it sometimes the other way around?

In the case of movie producer John Goldwyn, the Los Angeles home he shares with his husband, hotelier Jeff Klein, would seem to have been waiting for him all his life.

The prominent L.A. couple—Goldwyn's recent credits include *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, while Klein's Sunset Tower Hotel and its Tower Bar are a nexus of Hollywood power—reside in a relatively modest 3,500-square-foot dwelling designed in 1951 by architect John Elgin Woolf. A proponent of Hollywood Regency style, Woolf created homes for a roster of stars, among them Errol Flynn, Judy Garland, Cary Grant, Bob Hope, and Mae West. Walled courtyards, theatrical entries, and mansard roofs (a particularly fanciful touch in a horizontal town) were just a few of the architect's signatures.

Goldwyn and Klein's cottage is one of a trio that Woolf built on the Hollywood Hills estate of filmmaker George Cukor. The director of such classics as *The Philadelphia Story*, *Gaslight*, and *My Fair Lady*, Cukor began his professional life managing an upstate New York theater company, which is how he met Frances

Howard, a beautiful but undistinguished Midwestern actress who would go on to wed legendary film producer Samuel Goldwyn, John's grandfather.

"My grandmother moved to New York in the '20s and found her way to Flo Ziegfeld," Goldwyn says. It was while she was working as a vaudevillian actress that she met and fell for Cukor, and her future was set on its inevitable course. "For obvious reasons, that relationship did not last," Goldwyn says, noting that the director was, in the terminology of the time, a confirmed bachelor. But their platonic friendship lasted a lifetime, and it was Cukor who counseled her to accept an impulsive marriage proposal from the studio chief. "George said, 'Frances, you don't have much of a career as an actress, but you have a very bright future as Mrs. Sam Goldwyn,'" recounts John. "So it's completely serendipitous that I'm now living in a house once owned by a man my grandmother truly loved."

Though the history of the cottage he and Klein occupy is perhaps less storied than that of others on the Cukor estate ("Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy lived in the one next door to us," Goldwyn says), it was



Above: The kitchen is equipped with pendant lights from BK Antiques, a Sub-Zero refrigerator, a Blanco sink with Kallista fittings, and a Viking range. **Below:** The screening room, inspired by the fabled William Haines-designed oval sitting room in movie director George Cukor's residence, features suede-paneled walls crowned with copper molding, curtains of a Holland & Sherry fabric, and maple-and-oak parquet flooring; Madeline Stuart designed the leather armchairs as well as the velvet-covered club chairs and sofa, which are joined by a 1970 French bronze table from Habité and a vintage Baguès floor lamp.



In the dining alcove, a 1940s Empire-style bronze chandelier is suspended above a horn-inlaid Karl Springer table, which Klein inherited from his grandmother; the curtains are made of a Schumacher fabric. **Opposite:** The living room's gilded-iron cocktail table and the stools cushioned in vintage silk velvet are by Madeline Stuart; the '60s bookcases are from Adesso Imports, the '70s glass-top brass tables are from Todd Alexander Romano, and the carpet is from Mansour.



In the den, two Raoul Dufy watercolors hang above a Madeline Stuart Collection sofa upholstered in a Gretchen Bellinger linen velvet. The ceiling fixture is a Klein family heirloom, and the decorative wall panels were installed by the home's previous owner, the late interior designer Greg Jordan.





***Clockwise from left:** An armillary sphere stands at one end of the cypress-shaded swimming pool. An outdoor shower off the master bath. The terrace is appointed with furniture custom designed by architect Bob Ray Offenhauser and clad in a Janus et Cie fabric.*



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a little-altered gem belonging to the interior designer Greg Jordan when Klein encountered it in 2004. "I went as a guest, and I said to John, 'That's my ideal house,'" Klein recalls. "In L.A. so many things are big and McMansiony, but this house is full of Woolfian tricks that make it feel both cozy and grand."

By the time Klein acquired the dwelling from Jordan's estate in 2006, "it needed work," he says. After a short-lived mismatch with another decorator, Klein and Goldwyn turned to designer Madeline Stuart. Known for an assured eclecticism, Stuart had worked with Goldwyn and his former wife years earlier on a home in the Hancock Park neighborhood.

"Some designers bully their way through an interior, dictating and decreeing," Stuart says. "This house was clearly going to be an assemblage of ideas reflective of John's and Jeff's histories and sensibilities."

Thus a 1970s Karl Springer table from Klein's grandmother is juxtaposed with a set of Louis XVI-style chairs in the dining area. A chinoiserie table purchased at the venerable San Francisco shop Gump's in the '20s by Goldwyn's maternal grandfather, the Pulitzer Prize-winning dramatist Sidney Howard, sits atop the den's pale Khotan rug. In the living room, an Andy Warhol print that was a gift from Goldwyn's father joins a pair of Robert Longo lithographs of contorted figures, the first artworks the two men acquired as a couple. And interspersed throughout the home are custom-made furnishings by Stuart, including the master suite's sleek stainless-steel four-poster. If the low-key manner in which this diverse array comes together seems almost offhand, Klein says that was always the intention. "I can't stand anything being too decoratory," he says.

There are exceptions. Paying unabashed homage to a sitting room of celebrated swank in Cukor's William Haines-decorated residence (the property's main house), the men transformed a former garage into an oval screening room replete with plush suede walls, copper crown molding, basket-weave parquet flooring, and sumptuous velvet seating. "I thought it would be neat to have our version of that room in this cottage," Goldwyn says.

While Cukor was known for orchestrating formal Sunday lunches in his chamber, Klein and Goldwyn prefer to host small, casual dinners. Typically they start in the handsome garden before migrating to the screening room—because in a movie-industry town, that's what you do.

"The whole Hollywood ending of us living here was accidental," Klein says. Of course, everyone knows Hollywood endings seldom are. □



The master bedroom's stainless-steel four-poster with an upholstered headboard was custom made by Madeline Stuart and is dressed in E. Braun bedding; the swing-arm lamps are from Circa Lighting, and the Stuart-designed sofa is covered in a Lee Jofa fabric. **Opposite, from top:** In a guest room, a gilded candelabra is mounted over a midcentury Frits Henningsen sofa. The master bath, painted in a Benjamin Moore white, features Waterworks sink fittings.

