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A starburst granite-and-marble floor punctuates the entrance hall of *El Sueño*, entrepreneur Michael Rosenfeld's Los Angeles house, designed by architect Kevin A. Clark and decorated by Madeline Stuart. The artwork is *Landscape No. 556* (1998) by John Virtue, the Italian walnut stool is from Paul Ferrante, and the commode is 17th century; the walls are done in Pointing paint by Farrow & Ball. **OPPOSITE:** An 18th-century silver-gilt mirror hangs above a circa-1830 Italian console in the dining room. For details see Sources.



Spanish Steps



Designer Madeline Stuart's deft moves through a familiar Mediterranean style bring age-old grace to a brand-new house in Los Angeles

TEXT BY PETER HALDEMAN PHOTOGRAPHY BY SIMON UPTON PRODUCED BY ROBERT RUFINO





An antique Bakhtiari carpet from Aga John inspired the living room's color scheme. Stuart designed the sofa and the twin lounge chairs at left, covered in a Rogers & Goffigon velvet and an Old World Weavers fabric, respectively. *Imola Three I* by Frank Stella hangs between the windows, and an untitled work by Willem de Kooning is displayed above the 19th-century fireplace from Compas.

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OR BETTER OR WORSE, RED TILE ROOFS AND white stucco walls are as much a part of the iconography of Southern California as palm trees and convertibles. If the area's earliest examples of Spanish-style architecture, with their courtyards and trickling fountains, poetically evoke its Hispanic past, some later manifestations—fast-food restaurants, McMansions—would confound the conquistadors. It's not every day, in other words, that one comes across a new house as romantic and refined as its early-20th-century predecessors. Let alone a house that goes its forebears one better.

"I'd always loved the great homes by Wallace Neff and George Washington Smith and Reginald Johnson," says Michael Rosenfeld, a Los Angeles-based entrepreneur whose enthusiasm for Spanish Colonial architecture is perhaps rivaled only by his devotion to golf. Several years ago Rosenfeld acquired a choice piece of Santa Monica real estate that overlooked a eucalyptus-shaded fairway—but did not happen to come with a house by Neff or Smith or



Johnson (the lot was vacant). So he found his way to two contemporary experts in the genre: architect Kevin A. Clark and interior designer Madeline Stuart, both based in L.A. Their collaboration on an Andalusian-inflected residence in Bel Air for musician Lindsey Buckingham won Rosenfeld over. "They share my passion for doing things right," he says, "and for honoring the kind of workmanship that's so often lost today."

A great home of any vintage deserves a name, and *El Sueño* (the Dream) is Rosenfeld's fanciful designation for his. *El Sueño* may be

firmly rooted in tradition, but there's nothing hidebound about it, beginning with its siting. Located toward the back of a deep rectangular lot, the dwelling sits at a quirky angle to its formal front gardens, its asymmetrical façade and weathered-looking shutters as unassuming as a farmhouse in Seville. "The idea was to create more presence for a long, conventional property," Clark explains. "The house feels less blocky this way." It is also less gloomy than its 1920s prototypes. "When people think of the Spanish style, they generally associate it with a dark, fortressy feel," says Clark. "I wanted to make

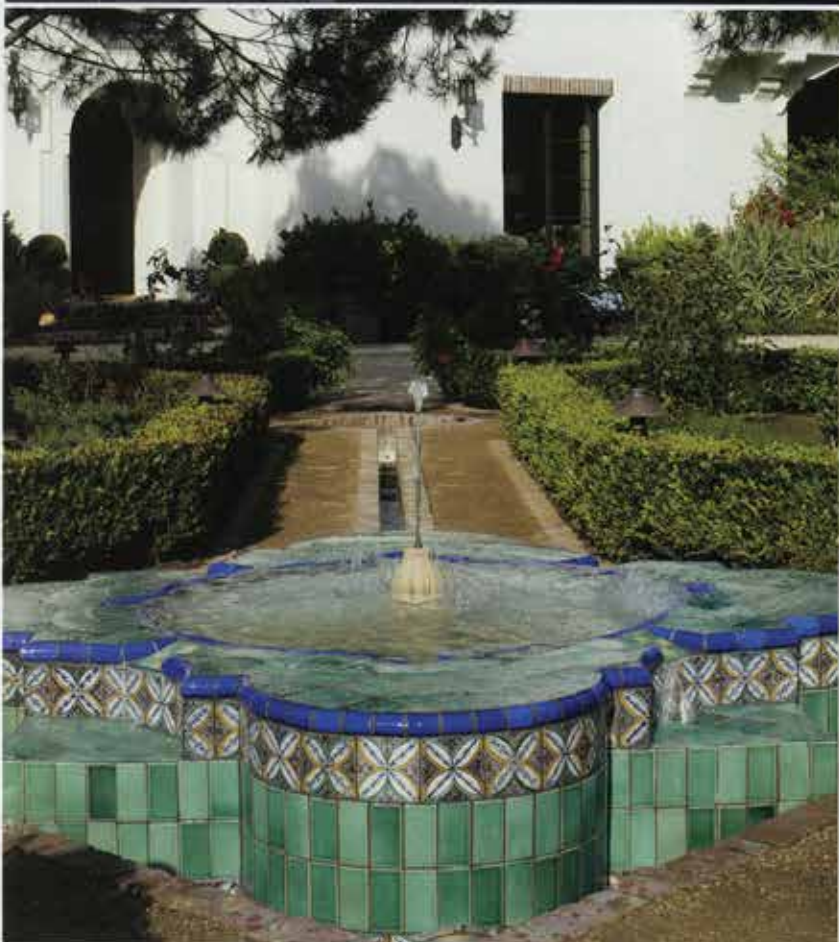


a home that had considerable natural light." The architect designed the public rooms around a sunny courtyard with a mosaic-tile fountain right out of the Alhambra. A second courtyard and a loggia along the rear of the house reinforce the indoor-outdoor connection.

El Sueño makes room for a few tricked-out spaces— theater, gym, putting green—that are very much of their time and place. But if the building is generously sized, at around 20,000 square feet, its rooms retain both the intimate proportions and the intricate details of another era. A crew of virtuoso craftsmen created all the millwork and

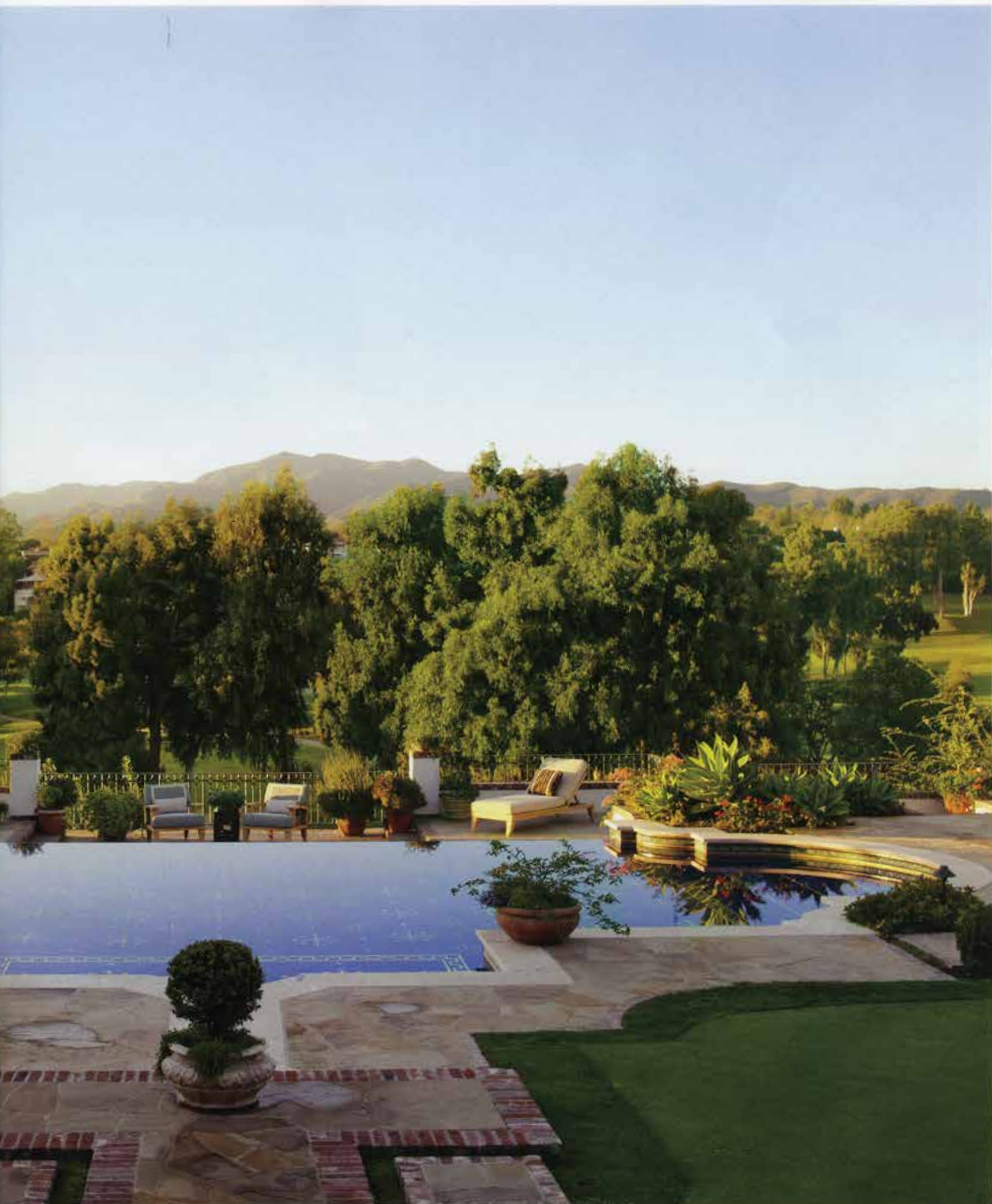
Artist Jean Horihata hand-painted the home's dramatic coffered ceilings. In the family room, velvets by Rose Tariow cover the custom-made sofas, the slate-top cocktail table is from Hollyhock, and the brass table lamps are from J.F. Chen.

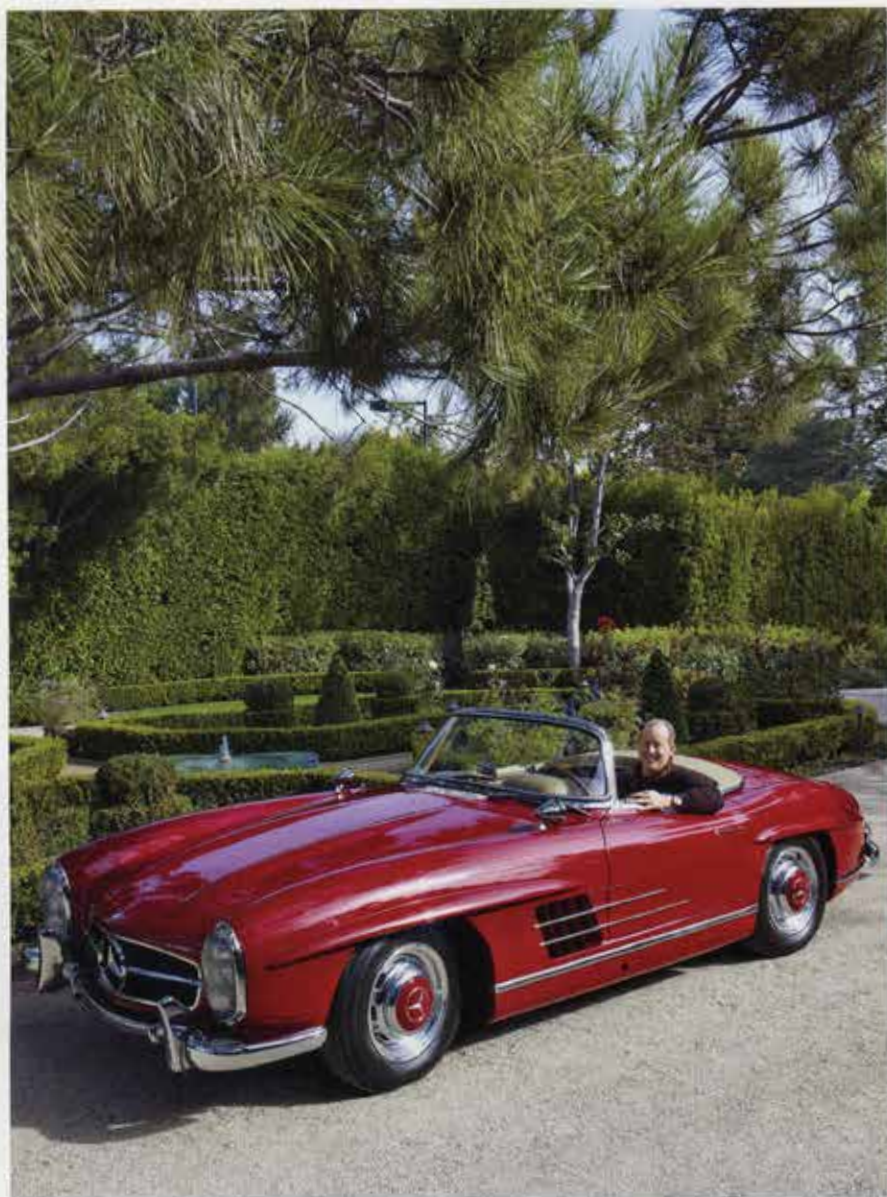
OPPOSITE: C. Mariani Antiques custom made the dining table and Louis XV-style chairs. The 19th-century Continental chandelier, strung with crystal and gilded papier-mâché beads, is from Objets Plus; the carpet is an antique Agra from Aga John.



The infinity-edge pool, tiled and framed with flagstone, is outfitted with teak furniture by Michael Taylor Designs. **LEFT, FROM TOP:** A powder room features walls hand-painted to mimic decorative Islamic tilework;

the 18th-century Italian marble sink is from Compas, and the stoneware vase and 1920s mirror are from Downtown. Low boxwood hedges surround an Andalusian-style fountain near the house's entrance.





FROM LEFT: Rosenfeld in his 1961 Mercedes-Benz 300SL Roadster. A stone serving table stands beneath a vaulted brick ceiling in the wine room; the stools are 1920s Italian, and the 19th-century French bronze chandelier is from Connoisseur Antiques.

OPPOSITE, FROM TOP: In the kitchen, cabinetry by architect Kevin A. Clark complements tiled walls; the pendant light in the window is from Blackman Cruz. Balconies of wrought iron and turned wood overlook a star-shaped fountain.

“They share my passion for doing things right,” says

grillwork; adzed, stenciled, and hand-painted numerous coffered ceilings; and forged every piece of hardware in the house. Decorative painter Jean Horihata devoted six months to the powder room alone, simulating ancient Islamic tilework by stenciling patterns over gessoed plaster, then glazing the walls like actual tiles. “Every project we collaborate on, Jean and I push each other a little further,” observes Stuart. “This time, I think I pushed her to the point of a nervous breakdown.”

The antique stone soap dish in the powder room was the designer’s very first acquisition for the house; the hand soap that sits in it followed. Stuart scoured the country for one-of-a-kind pieces—she

acquired more than 250 antique and vintage light fixtures alone—without being slavish to the Spanish aesthetic. A circa-third-century Roman mosaic panel serves as a tabletop in the living room, where it joins an antique Bakhtiari rug and an Italian carved-stone fireplace worthy of San Simeon. In the library, a cozy room with a hand-painted ceiling frieze, a Jules Leleu table of mahogany, gilt bronze, and steel looks perfectly at home with a pair of 1890 Swedish black leather wing chairs. An 18th-century Italian handblown-glass chandelier illuminates the entry’s star-motif marble floor (inspired by Palladio’s Il Redentore church in Venice), Italian walnut commode, and moody abstract painting by John Virtue. “Anyone



Rosenfeld of the home's designer and architect.

else might have hung a tapestry there," says Stuart, "but the Virtue sends a message that this house is more than a mere reinterpretation of another time."

And Rosenfeld hardly treats the place like a museum. One of his hangouts of choice these days is a mahogany-paneled "clubhouse," where he can be found playing poker with friends—when he's not out practicing his golf swing. He shares the home with his three children, who themselves are partial to the movie theater. So the present is essential here, but the past is never lost. As Stuart says, "What Michael really wanted was an old house, so this is a *new* old house in every way." □







Flanking the master bedroom's Art Deco-style bed are panels of a screen once owned by William Randolph Hearst, from Downtown. The bed linens are by Anichini, and the Régence commodes are from Florian Papp.



In one master bath, a 1950s mirror from Epoca is placed above a Stuart-designed lacquer vanity. In the other, '20s eagle sconces from the Florida estate of Alfred I. duPont, purchased from Remains Lighting, are installed against marble wainscoting.