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MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

For a lover of the Arts and Crafts movement, Madeline Stuart creates a cottage that brings a new spirit to the California tradition of handmade artistry

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More than a century old, Arts and Crafts architecture is certainly a venerated style. But it's hardly a fashionable one. "The last time the style was popular was back in the 1980s, when Barbra Streisand was collecting Stickley furniture and ran up the market for it," says interior designer Madeline Stuart. "No one would choose to build an Arts and Crafts house today," she adds. But that's exactly what a client asked her to do. "When it was going up," she says with a smile, "passersby were visibly shaken."

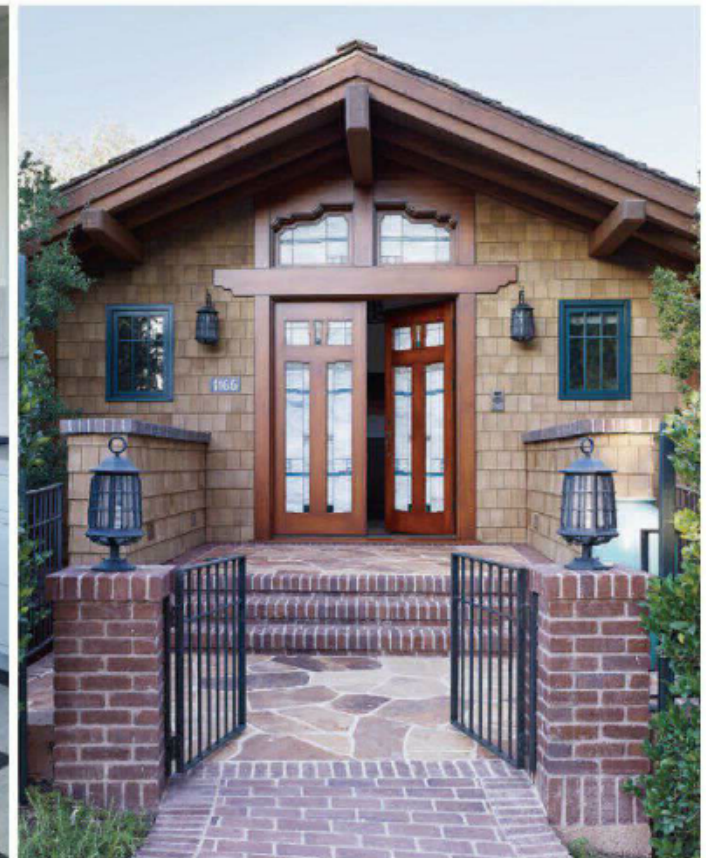
The businessman-philanthropist who built this cottage in Beverly Hills may have bucked convention, but in Stuart, he found a collaborator who could reimagine the style with contemporary flair. "Let's face it: Arts and Crafts architecture can be cloistered and claustrophobic," says the designer, who is known for her tailored yet feminine interiors. "And the furniture can become cumbersome and absolutely dreary. I wasn't going to travel down that road."

The ambitious ideal of creating an Arts and Crafts cottage for today began as a preservation effort. "Gregory Peck's first wife lived in a small house across the street from me," the owner explains. "When she put it up for sale, I was concerned that someone would tear it down and build something horrible." So he bought the house himself, only to realize that it couldn't be restored and that the steep hillside property presented serious engineering challenges. He then drafted the master designer and builder Robert Glaes to create a two-story, three-bedroom home that took its inspiration from a

LEFT: In the conservatory of a Beverly Hills house decorated by Madeline Stuart, the sofa, upholstered in a Lee Jofa fabric, and the cocktail table are custom made, the vintage pine armchairs by Axel Einar Hjorth have cushions covered in a Chapas Textiles linen, and the oak stools are vintage; the ceiling skylights are milk glass, the walls are walnut, and the floors are Spanish terra-cotta tiles. **ABOVE:** The garden off the kitchen, with ferns, pittosporum, and oaks. See Resources.



The dining room's Kaare Klint-style chairs, upholstered in a Jerry Pair leather, and white-oak table are custom designs, the iron-and-glass lanterns are circa 1910, the walls are walnut, and the floors are quartersawn oak. **FACING PAGE:** Custom-made wicker furniture and a circa-1950 cocktail table by Finn Juhl and Niels Vodder in the breakfast room; the rug is Turkish, the walls are painted in Pratt & Lambert Accolade in Solitary, and the trim is painted in Farrow & Ball Estate Emulsion in Clunch. See Resources.





National Historic Landmark, the 1908 Gamble House in Pasadena, California, by architects Greene & Greene. "I have visited there so many times, I think I could lead a docent tour," the owner jokes.

Together, the trio mapped out a plan to create a house that alluded to historically appropriate Los Angeles architecture without looking like a dinosaur. "This house needed to be referential, but not feel reverential," Stuart says. "I had to make it fresh and clean and relevant, not musty, dusty, and dated. I wanted to keep it light."

The first step was creating a solid foundation. While the house maintains signature Arts and Crafts elements—cedar-shake siding, extensive interior carpentry, and handwrought decor—Stuart ensured that the rooms had the generous proportions and views of a contemporary Southern California residence. For the owner, a Los Angeles native, this was a welcome update. "I grew up in a suburban tract house and have lived in Spanish, traditional, and modern homes," he says. "Arts and Crafts architecture was one of the first styles that did not consider a house a fortress against the elements. It was about making a California bungalow that opened itself to the beautiful weather and nature outdoors."

In the conservatory, milk-glass skylights and picture-window walls flood the room with sunlight. The spacious kitchen is period correct, with a Dutch door, Marmoleum patterned to resemble the marble checkerboard of a dance floor, and a paint color that morphs from blue to gray to pale green. "It's not a white kitchen," Stuart declares. "If I see one more of those, I will hang myself."

Upstairs, a bedroom for the owner's twin six-year-old daughters has a celestial-blue ceiling and whitewashed paneled walls featuring a pair of mischievous girls in artworks by Yoshitomo Nara.

Studiously avoiding the clichés of Stickley furniture, Stuart championed lesser-known early-20th-century designers, such as Axel Einar Hjorth and Charles Dudouyt, and brought in Arts and Crafts pieces from France, England, and Holland. One of her prize finds was the Danish lantern that illuminates the staircase, which she found in Paris. "I saw it in a window, but the shop was closed," she recalls. "I was fully prepared to wait overnight on the curb." Such perseverance paid off; Stuart's eye for singular pieces with great details also led her to hammered-copper tables with beautiful patina as well as contemporary cloisonné drum stools by Robert Kuo.

"Madeline followed the Arts and Crafts tradition of commissioning unique artisan pieces for this house," says the owner, who now has a set of dishes Stuart had made in Limoges. Stuart also worked with the handweavers Chapas Textiles to produce fabrics for her upholstered pieces and even devised a monogram for hand towels that was embroidered by Villa Savoia.

The owner admits that the cottage he built across the street from his own residence is his "architectural folly." Unlike the English garden variety, however, this one is fully functional. "My little ones use it like a playhouse, and the dining table seats 18, so it's a wonderful place to entertain guests." Often he pops over just to relax and watch the sunset. "I built this house as an act of enjoyment," he says. "They say you shouldn't fall in love with your own creation, but I have." ■

RIGHT, FROM TOP: Stuart designed the cabinetry, chest, sconces, and ceiling fixture in the master bath; the counters are Calacatta marble, and the sink fittings are by THG. The master bedroom's leather-and-oak bed is a custom design, the stools are vintage, and the lamp bases are circa-1880 pottery vases by Christopher Dresser. **FACING PAGE:** In the master bedroom, the armchairs, in a Chapas Textiles fabric, and the ottoman are custom designs, the stools are by Robert Kuo, and an antique Swedish pendant light hangs from the stucco-and-walnut ceiling; the circa-1904 desk is by Peder Vilhelm Jensen-Klint, and the custom rug is from Stark Carpet. See Resources.

