

MAY-JUNE 2016

# VERANDA

## *natural* BEAUTY

GLORIOUS GARDENS  
& INSPIRING SPACES

Historic Homes  
*for* Modern Living

# TAKE TWO

With a thrilling history that reads like a motion-picture script, an Art Deco house in Los Angeles is once again ready for its close-up after a Hollywood power couple decides to call it home.



INTERIOR DESIGN BY MADELINE STUART | ARCHITECTURAL RENOVATION BY KEVIN A. CLARK  
LANDSCAPE DESIGN BY CAROL PUCK ERICKSON | PHOTOGRAPHY BY MAX KIM-BEE  
PRODUCED BY CAROLYN ENGLEFIELD | WRITTEN BY FRANCES SCHULTZ

The 1930s house was built by Hollywood art director Cedric Gibbons and his wife, film star Dolores del Río. Chaises with cushions in a Janus et Cie fabric, Mimi London.



Period pieces nod to the house's pedigree. Jules Leleu chairs in a Keelen leather, Paul Stamati Gallery; vintage table, Blackman Cruz; curtains in a Casamance fabric; rug, Doris Leslie Blau; walls in Soft Chamois, Benjamin Moore. **OPPOSITE, FROM TOP:** Banquette cushions in a Zimmer + Rohde fabric; alabaster lamp, Downtown. Antique tub chairs in a Claremont fabric with Samuel & Sons trim; coffee table, Ambianic; art, Raymond Saunders.



**LOS ANGELES DESIGNER MADELINE STUART'S TASK WAS BOTH ENVIABLE AND ABSTRUSE:** to reconcile a 1930s architectural icon conceived by a flamboyant Tinseltown legend with a low-key couple in the entertainment industry who wanted a livable home for today. The house—which epitomizes the period's glamorous Art Deco architecture and the work of its creator, the storied art director Cedric Gibbons—could easily have veered into cliché. Gibbons built the house, set on a shady side street in the Santa Monica hills, for his movie-star wife, Dolores del Rio. It is an eloquent echo of his gleaming black-and-white stage sets, all zigzag motifs and streamlined silhouettes. Such a house dictates that you pay attention to its prevailing aesthetic, Stuart concedes. "But we didn't want it to look like a *Busby Berkeley* musical," she says. "And that's quite a challenge when you have shiny black linoleum floors." A setting like this is one thing to dance across; it's quite another to live in.

Stuart and her clients, who acquired the property several years ago from a well-known producer and director, intended to honor the legacy. Be that as it may, all those right angles, steel-cased windows, soaring ceilings, and reflective surfaces can get austere in a hurry—an off-putting prospect not lost on the owner herself. "We are warm people, and we want people to feel welcome when they come here," she says.

The resplendent **ART DECO SALON**—sensitively reimagined for the current owners—revels in the joy, glamour, and mystique of old Hollywood.



Separate seating areas make the large salon feel intimate. Built-in banquettes in a custom Chapas Textiles fabric; vintage armchair in a Suzanne Tucker Home fabric, Lobel Modern; custom club chairs in a Holland & Sherry silk velvet; custom rugs, Mansour; walls in DKC-55, Donald Kaufman Color.

## L.A. STORY

When Cedric Gibbons built the house for himself and Dolores del Rio, he created a setting worthy of their mutual glamour. Gibbons, who won 11 Academy Awards, also designed the Oscar statuette itself. The Mexican-born del Rio is considered one of the first major Latina Hollywood stars and remains a cult figure to this day. Thankfully, their house has been preserved intact. A series of respectful owners have kept the period details, from the stunning ocean liner-esque steel banister to foot pedals for lavatory taps. The house has had its close-ups, too: It was Eric Masters's residence in the 1985 film *To Live and Die in L.A.*

ULLSTEIN BLD VIA GETTY IMAGES

The salon today is almost identical to when Gibbons and del Rio (pictured in the same space, opposite) built it. **THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** Custom sofa in a La Manufacture Preme fabric; curtains in a Mark Alexander fabric. Custom wicker chairs and sofas with cushions in Janus et Cie and Giati fabrics; art, Nelly Mercier. A new wing with a sunroom and loggia blends seamlessly with the original structure.





Stuart embraced that sensibility and, with the architecture off-limits, set about addressing it with furnishings and fabrics. To begin, there were the built-in banquettes, of which there are no fewer than six. Stuart speculates that their installation at the time must have been rather daring: "They were as deep as beds, and heaven knows what went on there in the heyday," she says. "But you couldn't really sit on them." She had the backs built out to create a comfortable seating depth and added arms to make them more sitting-friendly. A predominantly neutral palette unifies areas that flow into one another, punctuated with color and texture. Linen, velvet, silk, and sateen in teal, apricot, avocado, and aubergine enliven the rooms without busying them. Period alabaster and metal lamps add sculptural shapes.

In the upstairs salon, situated between two bedrooms, lush mohair rugs define intimate seating areas. "That room needed to be sexy," says Stuart, "to draw people up there. It is such a surprise when you come up those stairs and see it. It's one of the most spectacular rooms I've ever seen, and it's also a real living space where they spend time and entertain."

And while some large living surely happens here, the two-bedroom house is not at all big by Hollywood standards. Extra living and entertaining space takes the form of a guesthouse, poolhouse, and tennis pavilion, all thoughtfully conceived and thoroughly enjoyed. There is a grace about the property that the owner says drew her to it. Palm trees sway. The sea is a distant, muffled roar. Though the house is a mile from the beach, the canyon's topography allows the ocean sounds to carry. Magic, it seems, is not just for the movies. □



A hand-painted mural by Jean Horiata Design gives the powder room subtle glamour. Vintage dresser, *Objets Plus*. OPPOSITE, FROM TOP: Custom bed with headboard in a *Soie de Lune* fabric; custom chair and ottoman in an *Old World Weavers* fabric; vintage French floor lamp, *Lee Calicchio*; curtains in a *Nobilis* fabric; vintage ceiling fixture, *Paul Ferrante*; rug, *Doris Leslie Blau*. Chair in a *Lelievre* fabric, *Dragonette Ltd.*; Lalique pendant fixture, *Paul Stamati Gallery*; rug, *Stark*. For more details, see *Sourcebook*.

