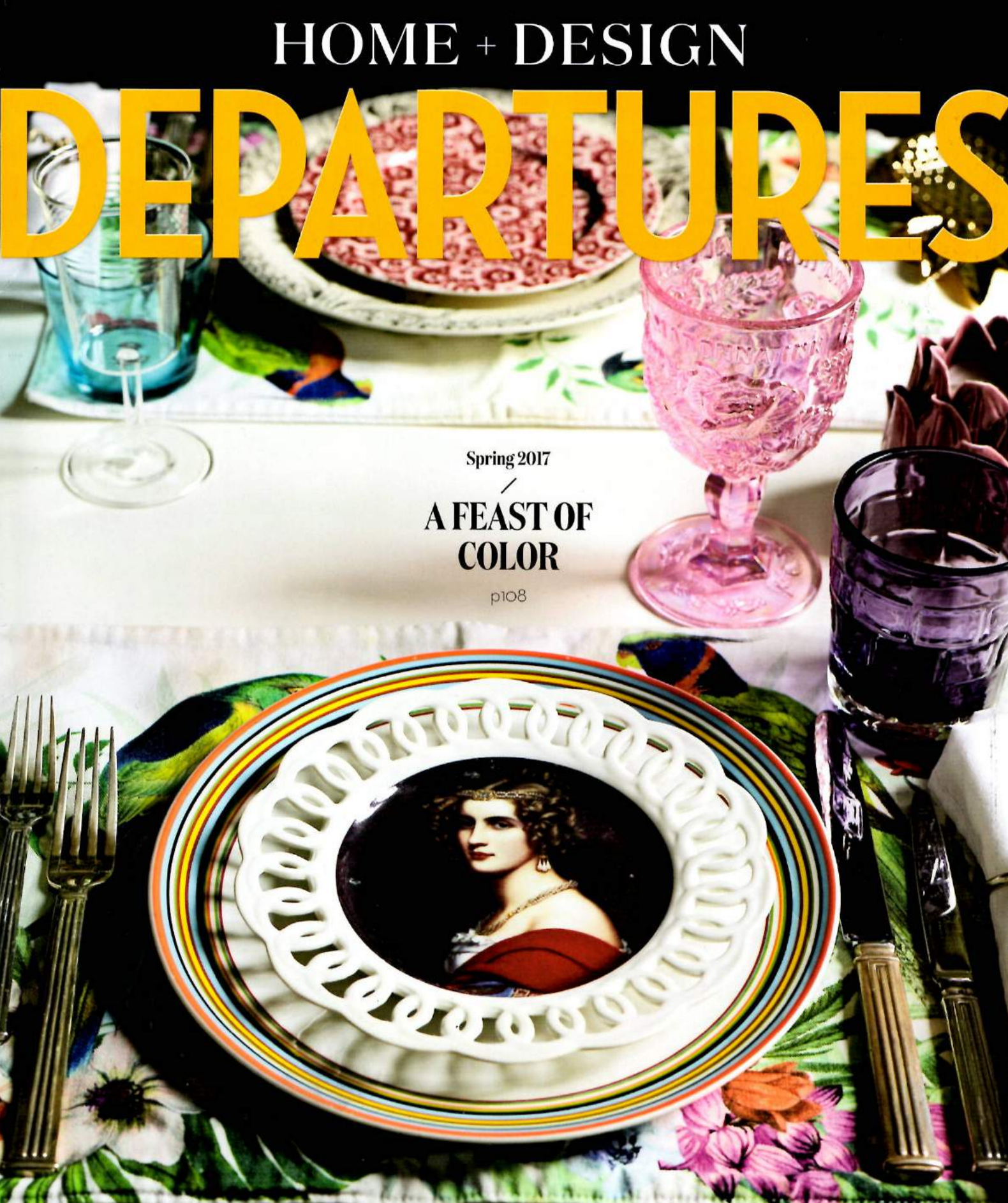
HOME + DESIGN

DEPARTURES



Spring 2017

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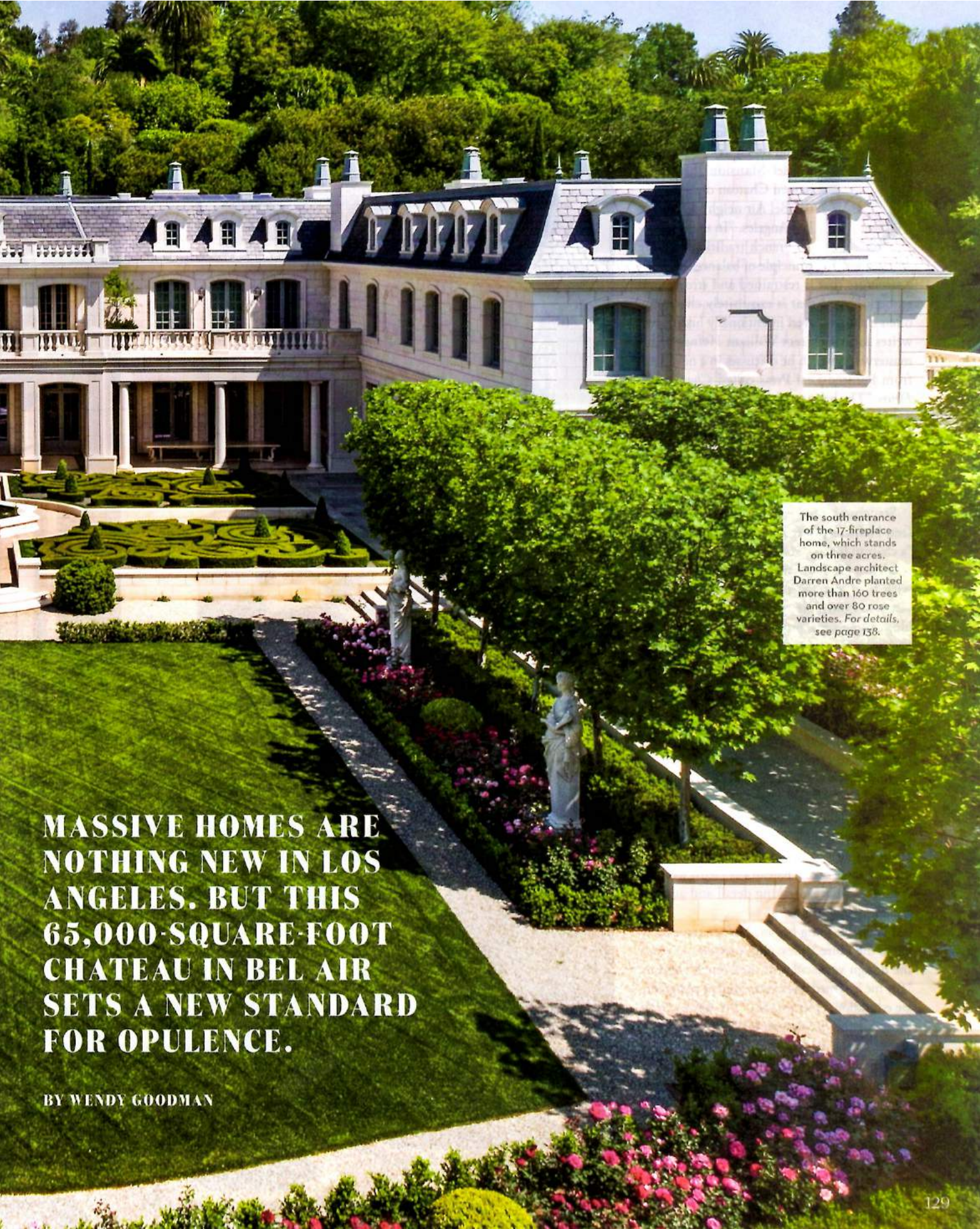
A FEAST OF COLOR

p108

WHERE
GREAT
BECAME
GRAND



The south entrance of the 17-fireplace home, which stands on three acres. Landscape architect Darren Andre planted more than 160 trees and over 80 rose varieties. *For details, see page 138.*

MASSIVE HOMES ARE NOTHING NEW IN LOS ANGELES. BUT THIS 65,000-SQUARE-FOOT CHATEAU IN BEL AIR SETS A NEW STANDARD FOR OPULENCE.

BY WENDY GOODMAN

One can only imagine what future generations will make of the newly constructed... house? Mansion? Estate?... named Chateau des Fleurs in the Bel Air neighborhood of Los Angeles. "In many classical French traditions...there is an underlying principle of balance, between a structure that is restrained and strong, and embellishment that is exquisitely charming, often elaborate, even intentionally luxurious," writes local architect William Hefner of his masterwork, which he discusses in a new book from Pointed Leaf Press called *Chateau des Fleurs.* "The balance of this house was to create a powerfully simple structure that would feel timeless and not imitative, while inviting an Old World opulence to the fit and finish of the architecture in a way that would be both decorative and something more: modern."

Structure? That works. At 65,000 square feet, Hefner's project—which he describes as "a château for the 21st century"—is his eighth residence for anonymous clients he's worked with for more than 20 years; it took eight years to complete. Design and real estate blogs, using aerial imagery, raised considerable eyebrows and let fly the rumors—including that it was built on spec to sell for more than $100 million, which the owners strongly refute. "L.A.'s 60K-Square-Foot Chateau Des Fleurs Will Eat Us All" read the headline on the popular site Curbed.

Of course, astounding feats of real estate are nothing new in L.A., where bigger has historically counted as better. At the moment, it's the city's largest house, but size isn't the point. "There are a couple of houses in process that are going to be larger," Hefner says. Larger, yes, but three-acre Chateau des Fleurs won't be surpassed in breathtaking detail and authenticity anytime soon.

Before building began, Hefner traveled to Paris, the Loire Valley, and Versailles to study the design vernacular of the French château. "For me it turned out to be a kind of postgraduate education," Hefner says. "My way to create value for the project, to really ensure that it would be classic, was to dive into the details, both in terms of what that meant construction-wise and to ensure it would be authentic and true." One of the kitchens featured in the book, the family one (there are four others: a chef's kitchen, catering kitchen, wine cellar kitchen, and one for staff), includes a breakfast room

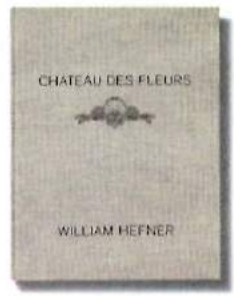
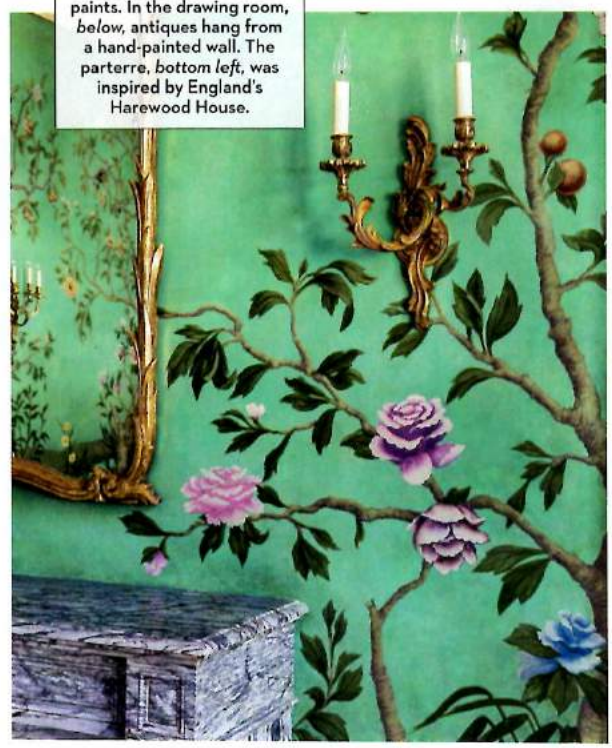
AT THIS MOMENT, IT'S L.A.'S LARGEST HOUSE, BUT SIZE ISN'T THE POINT.

Much of the home, including the entrance, *top left*, features custom wrought-iron railings and floors made of granite and marble. The ballroom, *above*, uses Farrow & Ball paints. In the drawing room, *below*, antiques hang from a hand-painted wall. The parterre, *bottom left*, was inspired by England's Harewood House.

THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: JAMES RAY SPAHN; LAURA HULL; JENS MORTENSEN

and a large-scale, black-and-white-patterned floor that complements a black design highlighted in polished brass and gold-leaf details. "We imagined what it would be like if Coco Chanel had a kitchen she liked to cook in," he says.

While the architectural narratives might evoke 18th-century royalty, there are many contemporary conveniences, among them 31 bathrooms and four elevators. A beautiful garden is spread out over the formal landscape, just as it would have been on a French estate. Except this one is over a subterranean parking garage with two levels—one for staff, one for family—that holds 34 *voitures* in all. "For every project we do together," Hefner says, "the clients get exactly what they want." ♦



The 208-page book *Chateau des Fleurs*