

Western Interiors

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AND DESIGN





Sunshine State of Mind

Tim Clarke's light California
palette refreshes a Craftsman
bungalow in Santa Monica

Los Angeles designer Tim Clarke breathed new life into a poorly remodeled 1928 Craftsman-style house (above) in Santa Monica, California, for Robert and Jennifer Morton by restoring its original details, rearranging the interior architecture and installing modern furnishings. **opposite:** In the family room, split bamboo shades, indigo-dyed drapery linen from Raoul Textiles and a rattan armchair are juxtaposed with a leather-and-oak low table and a red vintage-style mirror designed by Clarke. The matte-finished tiles on the fire surround are Cuban.





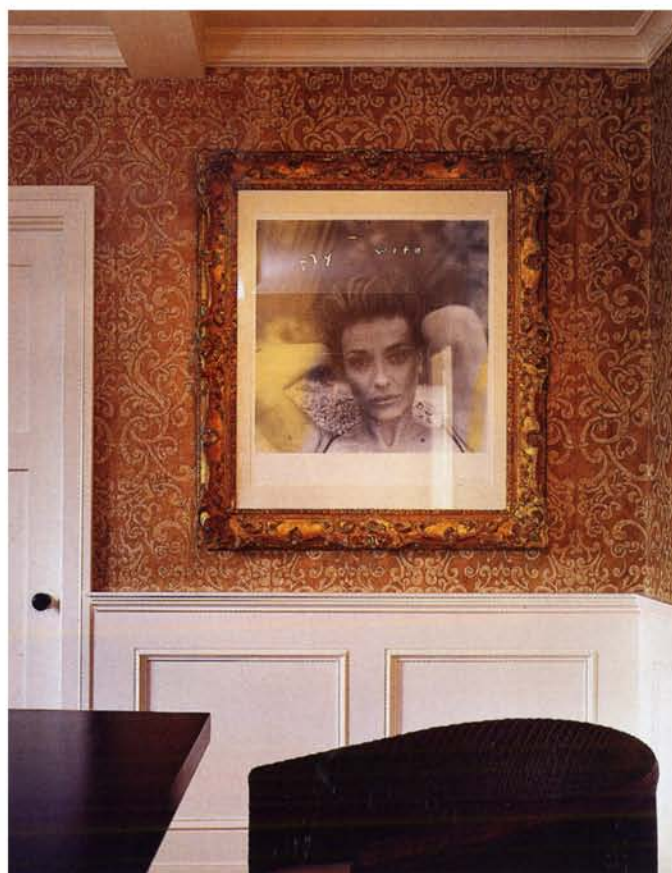
above: "I wanted to be sensitive to place," says Clarke, who had Christian Liaigre armchairs from the Holly Hunt collection covered with lavender Rogers & Goffigon linen for the living room. The 1940s cabinet is from J. F. Chen Antiques. A Diane Arbus photograph is in the hall. **opposite:** A bamboo-topped low table and Raoul Textiles drapery fabric add texture and color in the living room.

A HOUSE ALWAYS TELLS ME WHAT IT WANTS TO LOOK LIKE," SAYS DESIGNER TIM CLARKE. "THE STARTING POINT COMES FROM THE ARCHITECTURE. IF YOU'RE TRUE TO THE BONES OF THE BUILDING, THEN YOU'RE GOING TO BE SUCCESSFUL." In the case of a 1928 bungalow-style residence in Santa Monica, California, it was difficult to understand what the house had to say. "It's located on one of the best tree-lined streets in the area," says the designer, "but the previous owner took out all of the detail and did this horrendous addition. It was the wrong scale for a house of this period."

On the other hand, clients Robert and Jennifer Morton—a television producer and a restaurant owner, respectively—were quite clear about their needs. "The first thing I said to Tim was, 'Make me like this house a little bit more,'" says Robert Morton, who is originally from New York and was not used to a suburblike environment. "I never talked to neighbors in all my life, and all of a sudden I'm living in a place where I'm getting to know my neighbors." The Malibu transplants required some adjustment to their new surroundings as well as a house with distinct personality. "We didn't want anything serious," Morton adds, "but we wanted to pay homage to the structure's age and tradition."

After working with Michael S. Smith, Clarke established his Los Angeles firm in 1997. A few years later he opened a retail shop specializing in antiques, midcentury furnishings, vintage and modern







opposite, clockwise from top: Clarke-designed chairs and a table with a bamboo top in the breakfast area. A Julian Schnabel print in the dining room. Ollie, the residents' dog, beneath works by McDermott & McGough in the master suite. **above:** The kitchen looks to the family room through a punched opening.

lighting and fine art photography. The designer, who also recently released his own line of reproduction furniture, has as much experience arranging interior architecture as he does arranging furnishings. "It's hard for me to just decorate a room with pretty furniture," he says. "I need to get the background right."

The Mortons proved to be as thorough as Clarke. "They expressed a need to get rid of the bad and add the details back in," says the designer, who reinstated elements of the Arts and Crafts aesthetic and brought the rooms back down to scale. He restored the molding and the oak flooring with a walnut border throughout. He re-created the kitchen, the breakfast area and the family room, which had previously been combined. "I put up a wall with a punched opening between the kitchen and the family room so that there's still a relationship between the areas but they aren't so enormous," says Clarke.

Santa Monica's intense sunlight dictated the interior's palette. "We balanced the light with bigger windows on one side," says Clarke. "I wanted pale backgrounds for the bright rooms." He then inject-





left: "I added tongue-and-groove paneling in the master bedroom to make it feel like it had been there all along," says Clarke. Beneath an Ingo Maurer light fixture is a sofa covered with linen from Ralph Lauren Home and a chair upholstered with Donghia striped fabric. **above:** Prints by Donald Sultan are in the master bath.

ed them with spots of color. "After Jennifer and I decided on lavender and blues for the living area," Clarke says, "I found a 1940s cabinet with jade inserts." So he brought in more green in the form of pottery and glass vases. "The space opens to the back yard, which is very green," he says. "It just made sense." In the family room "the contrast of the navy draperies against the lavender and khaki upholstery accentuates the brightness." Christian Liaigre chairs and a sofa are covered with cotton and linen. "I wanted natural materials that are appropriate for this climate," says Clarke. Split bamboo shades, a seagrass rug and the fire surround's matte tilework soak up some of the light and provide texture in the room.

To set the house apart, Clarke tweaked it by supplying modern elements: "I kept the spaces simple and used midcentury furnishings with clean lines, mixing in a few quirky things." The table in the breakfast area was inspired by an old concrete factory table with a metal base. Clarke topped it instead with bleached bamboo. Robert Morton's modern photographs and paintings made their own statement. There are three photographs by Diane Arbus. A print by Julian Schnabel hangs in the dining room.

"I like to bring things down to the simplest touches," says Robert Morton. "Tim is very good at that. When I'm inside this house with the windows open and the ocean breeze coming in, it's the greatest. I had a bit of reluctance about moving here. Now I never leave the neighborhood." +

"The little garage at the end of the pool is so romantic," says Clarke. "When you're sitting at the right place in the back yard, you see only blue sky and mountains."



