



A blaze in the cast-stone fireplace renders the vast fireside room cozier. Facing page: A limestone table anchors a fireside room seating area.



# A Hollywood Ending

*A Los Angeles–bred designer blends influences from east and west coasts to bring a sense of 1930s glamour to her own West Hartford, Connecticut, Tudor-style home.* **Text by Megan Fulweiler • Photography by Bruce Buck • Interior Design: Tammy Randall Wood, Interior Archaeology**



**A**ction! A door opens to reveal an entry hall so spacious it could serve as the lobby of a grand old hotel. Still, the ambience is warm, welcoming and even a trifle sexy. It's not what the audience—in this case, houseguests—would expect to find in West Hartford, Connecticut, even in a landmark 1928 home like this one. But then, this is the kind of story around which films could be made.

It all began three years ago when interior designer Tammy Randall Wood pulled up the drive. Stoner Mansion, as the house has always been

known in these parts, stood forlornly at the end. Uninhabited for a decade, the place exuded a rescue-me vibe that Wood found hard to resist. She peered through the cobwebbed windows and fell totally in love. The raccoons frolicking in the master bedroom and the basement so full of aged mechanicals it resembled “the belly of the *Titanic*,” as Wood puts it, were of no relevance. “The craftsmanship was incredible,” says the intrepid designer. “The whole thing took my breath away. I was completely awestruck by the cast-stone fireplace that’s big enough to stand in. I just kept telling myself, ‘I can do this, I can do this.’”



The family's Papillon, Trixie, perches on a custom sofa in the sunny conservatory, where antiques and modern pieces happily coexist. *Facing page top:* The living room's drapes inspired the home's palette. *Facing page bottom:* A whimsical sculpture gives the slate-tiled room garden-like flair.

And so she did. But it was more than just a renovation. The lovely house presented an opportunity for the designer, who runs her bicoastal firm, Interior Archaeology, from West Hartford and Beverly Hills, California, to mesh east- and west-coast influences in a home of her own. Old friends and clients are well familiar with her talents. But a wide-eyed Yankee visiting for the first time might need a moment to soak up the fresh, California-inflected rooms. Considering the house's 13,000 square feet, the renovation was a major undertaking. The scale was huge (100 yards of fabric for living room curtains!), and every surface warranted help. "We had

to pick along, but we did it," says Wood. Even the vintage boiler is back and chugging like a champ.

Happily, there were good surprises, too. In addition to the glorious woodworking, Wood and her

## The designer peered through the cobwebbed windows and fell totally in love.

husband, David—the former president of Bose and now CEO of a Los Angeles-based company—were thrilled to discover some modern plusses like a top-notch elevator, closets that light up at the opening

Upholstered chairs boost dining room comfort. *Below:* The dining room sideboard is crotch mahogany. *Facing page top:* The handsome woodwork throughout the house is original, including the paneled wall along the home's main staircase. *Facing page bottom:* Velvet benches flank the gracious entry.



of the door and hidden roll-up screens in the iron casement windows. Less fun memories, like weeks of incessant banging and dust, have dimmed. The authentic Tudor-style house has returned to being a star. Wood's penchant for mixing antiques with newer pieces, keeping patterns to a minimum and putting it all together against a rich but subdued backdrop has imbued the larger-than-life house with livability and style.

"I search for a spark when I'm beginning a project," the designer says. "Here, it was the Colefax linen I chose for the living room curtains. I could





live with this pattern for a hundred years.” The living room, bedecked with those curtains and damask-covered chairs, certainly comes across as timeless.

It’s in the massive fireside room that a bit of Hollywood glamour comes into play. The huge stone fireplace that first claimed Wood’s heart is coupled with a pair of French reproduction chests, neoclassic gilt mirrors, a Michael Taylor table and a horn chandelier. “I love antiques, but to make them shine you have to combine them with contemporary furnishings,” Wood explains. “Also,

you have to edit. I could have put in twice as much furniture all around, but I wanted the architecture to be in the forefront.”

Her talent for juxtapositions carries over to the sunny dining room as well. Guests hunker down at an 1850 Duncan Phyfe dining table. A 1920s sideboard is the stage for a pair of antique Chinese porcelain vases. At night, sconces that are original to the house shed a romantic light over it all.

Nearby neighbors—the butler’s pantry, the gleaming cook’s kitchen (with its Christopher Peacock cabinetry) and the cheery breakfast room—



are newly outfitted with antique terra-cotta floors. In the last, the rustic tile becomes an inventive foil for a delicate Pierre Frey wallcovering. “Wherever something is feminine, you need something masculine,” Wood says. Obviously, that also explains the leather dining chairs and the bold chandelier constructed of iron horseshoes.

More notable still is the conservatory. Who would think, for instance, to marry antique Jacobean chairs with two more of Michael Taylor’s forward-thinking tables in such a spot? Yet, once Wood points out that the silhouettes of Taylor’s creations speak to the chairs’ barley-twist legs, it makes

perfect visual sense. The primitive nineteenth-century carpenter’s trunk in their midst looks as contented as a sleeping cat. And one more personal and provocative fillip: a harp belonging to Wood’s daughter-in-law invites strumming in the corner.

Wood is a native of Los Angeles and the daughter of a movie director, so it’s not surprising that a hint of 1930s Hollywood elegance underlies her schemes. Whereas the master suite might simply have been tailored and comfortable, she added a cashmere rug in tones of lush cocoa and icy blue, raw silk curtains and hand-blocked linen shades. The couple’s bed is her design. Generously propor-



Lush materials define the master bedroom. *Facing page top:* An Italian neoclassical table sits at the foot of the contemporary staircase. *Facing page bottom:* The breakfast room hosts a Swedish sideboard.

tioned Barbara Barry console tables serve as nightstands and help maintain order. And since every ultimate retreat must have a fireplace, there's one here in the sitting area.

The couple's private domain also includes two baths and the designer's wardrobe room, along with David's walk-in closet. It all makes for a very genteel, yet efficient, suite—not a bad combination for this busy pair, whose days whiz by in a flurry of meetings and deadlines.

But then, there are those precious occasions when the family takes times to gather. In a house of this magnitude, it would have been understand-

able had Wood devised a some-rooms-are-off-limits scenario. Instead, her work affirms that, incredible architecture and stunning trappings aside,

## A hint of 1930s Hollywood elegance underlies Wood's schemes.

this is their home—an environment that's as joyous and nurturing as it is glamorous. What better ending could such a tale ever hope to have? •

**Resources** For more information about this home, see page 140.