

**SPLENDID MAKEOVERS: ENTICING BEFORES AND AFTERS, Pages 40 & 50**

# House Beautiful

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## SIMPLE ELEGANCE

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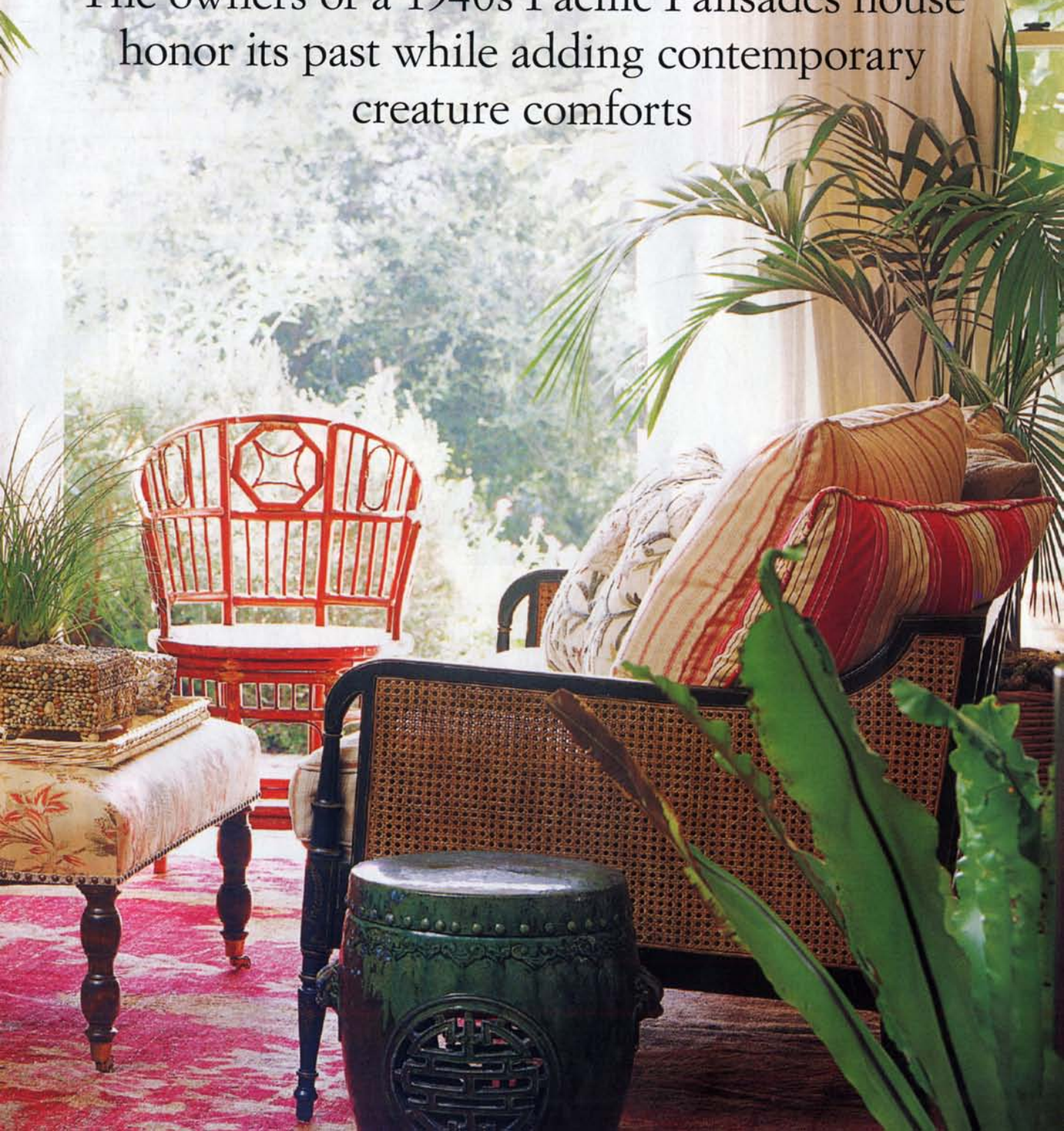
A pink carpet provides a wash of bright color in the airy, light-filled sunroom. Pillows on the high-backed chairs from Brenda Antin and a reproduction cane settee are made from vintage fabrics. The handkerchief linen curtains frame the view unobtrusively and diffuse light softly when drawn.



Writer: Roslyn Suleas  
Photographer: Victoria Pearson  
Producer: Miguel Flores-Vianna

# CHARACTER BUILDING

The owners of a 1940s Pacific Palisades house honor its past while adding contemporary creature comforts



This page: You can jump into the pool from the guesthouse porch, an open-air space the Gordons use for dinner parties as well as poolside lounging. Opposite above: Another small structure in the garden provides a studio and office for Karen, with a barn door that opens up the whole space. Banana-leaf wallpaper from First Editions amplifies the outdoor feeling. Opposite below: The green curtains in the dining room are lined with the same handkerchief linen used in the sunroom, so that the house has a uniform look when viewed from the yard.





A PLACE WITH A SENSE OF HISTORY was the goal for Karen and Mark Gordon when they began looking around in the Pacific Palisades area of Los Angeles. “They didn’t want an overblown California mansion with huge rooms,” says Tim Clarke, who was commissioned by the Gordons as their interior designer shortly after they found their 1940s two-story house. “And they wanted to hire someone who would help them acquire pieces over time, rather than deliver a fully finished look.”

First, however, the house required some structural changes. It lacked a family room, had a master bedroom addition that could only be entered through another bedroom, and its large kidney-shaped swimming pool overpowered the garden. Working with Clarke and architects Barbara Schnitzler and Denise Tomlan, the Gordons added some bedrooms, a family room, and a new staircase. They also put in a new pool and built two outbuildings in the garden—a guest cottage and an office. “We ended up doing more work than we had envisaged,” says Karen ruefully, “but isn’t that what always happens?”

Clarke felt that working on the project from its earliest stages was an ideal situation. “When you start with floor plans, talking to the architect about where the electrical outlets will go, and



This page: An expandable table, rather than the center island, is the focus of the bright, yellow-painted kitchen, which has easy-to-clean white Corian countertops. Windsor chairs are English antiques. Opposite: In the adjoining mudroom, a cat-shaped doorway serves the family pet. Flowers from the garden and artwork by the Gordons' elder daughter, Emma, adorn the custom cabinetry.





what kind of window casements would be best, it means you can troubleshoot a lot of potential problems at the beginning rather than trying to come up with solutions later.”

Once basic issues were dealt with, the designer began to consider what kind of furniture would work best. “We wanted the house to feel traditional, but not stuffy or frilly,” says Karen. “And we wanted it to be wash-and-wear because I was about to have a baby. I didn’t want a house where you couldn’t relax.”

For the sunroom, living room, and dining room—the central section of the house—Clarke suggested upholstered sofas from George Smith, which he combined with antique French cane chairs in a Chinese style, and custom-made reproduction pieces. “I like to order the big pieces first and leave details until the end,” he says. “I want to avoid that matched, coordinated look. When you can try out different rugs, lamps, throws, and accessories with what you have installed, you’ll usually choose things that you wouldn’t have



on paper, and it always looks far better.” A case in point was the improbably pink carpet in the sunroom, which picks up the tints in the vintage floral fabric on the ottoman and striped ticking on the sofa, and sets off the vibrant greens of the garden to perfection. “It’s California,” says Clarke. “I wanted to keep color flowing into the house.”

Clarke advised the Gordons to resist the current trend of combining the family room and kitchen: “It would have been completely out of character in an older house.” Instead, a window between the two rooms both connects and separates them, and a 1930s table that expands to seat twelve in the kitchen provides a focus both for daily meals and entertaining. “The table was a great find,” says Karen. “I love to cook and to have people over informally in the kitchen.”

Clever touches abound in this light, open room. A center island has foot-pedals to operate the faucet. A stainless-steel backsplash that reaches to the ceiling has a quilted section to soften its expanse. An antique-style pot rack is both sculptural and practical.

“A good decorator takes what you like and makes it great rather than pasting on his or her vision,” says Karen. “Then he makes you think it was all your idea. That’s what Tim did for us.” ●



This page: A corner of the sunroom features a carved Chinese console and two antique Chinese garden stools. Old botanicals of birds, framed in bamboo, are part of a growing collection. Opposite above: Designer Tim Clarke. Opposite below: daughter Emma's room is painted in two pale stripes of pink. Clarke found her bed in an antiques shop, painted it white, and put fabric inserts in the headboard. The woven cotton rug is from Woodard & Greenstein. For more details, see Resources.

