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Art Deco Dream

Jazz Age Paris Inspires a 21st-Century Palace

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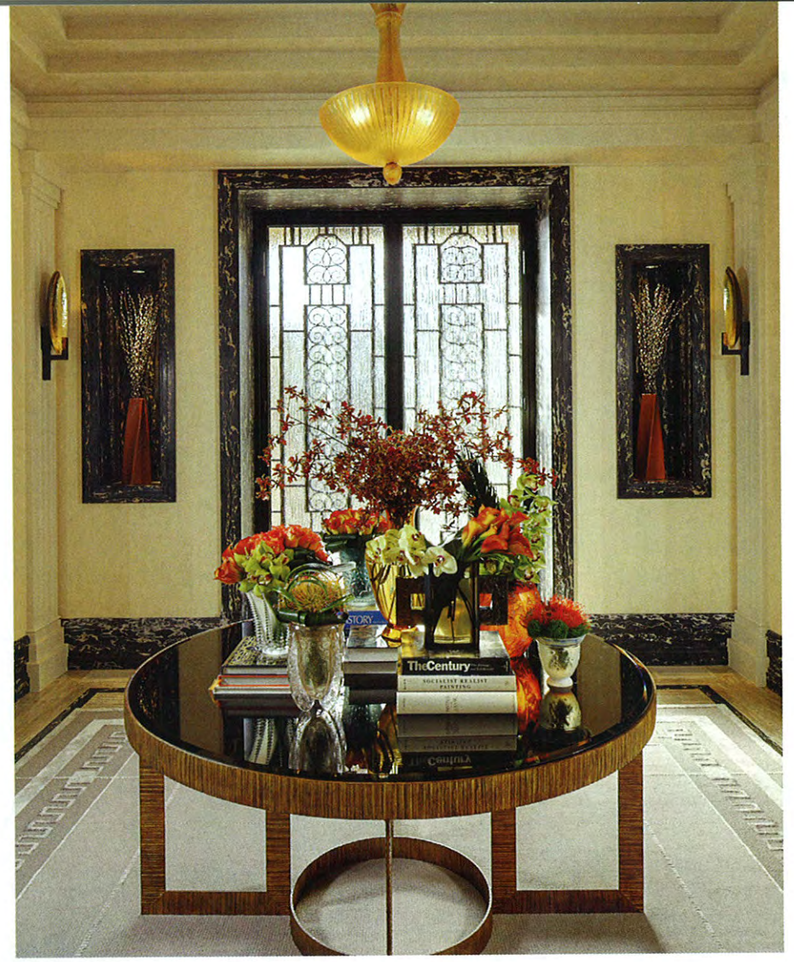
MILLION-DOLLAR MODELS FLAUNT THE AUTOMAKER'S ART

Serious Indulgence

BY Erika Heet

PHOTOGRAPHY BY Erhard Pfeiffer

Founded on old-world architectural principles and crafted from some of the Earth's finest materials, this Italianate villa in Beverly Hills—built for a husband and wife who often host their grown children and grandchildren—showcases thoughtful detail and a lighthearted spirit that together make the property an irresistible choice for ***Robb Report*'s Ultimate Home 2012**.



Western Front | Of all the new properties considered by the editors for *Robb Report*'s 2012 Ultimate Home award, one exceptional residence—a 22,000-square-foot Italian-style limestone villa in Beverly Hills—was overwhelmingly determined to be most worthy of this year's distinction. The creators of the seven-bedroom house, which was completed in October of last year, include a quartet of Los Angeles–based design veterans: Richard Landry, the architect behind the last two Ultimate Homes; builder John Finton, who has constructed two homes to have received the honor in previous years; interior designer Joan Behnke, who also contributed to a past award winner; and landscape designer Christine London.

Once this team was assembled in 2009, the homeowners—an entrepreneur and a philanthropist with a large extended family—expressed their wishes for a home in which they could entertain on many levels, from intimate family gatherings to fund-raisers for hundreds of people. "We also wanted to be able to fuse our two favorite architectural and design elements: classical Italian and Art Deco," says the husband. The west-facing facade (previous pages)—which, like the rest of the home, is carved from blocks of limestone sourced in Dijon, France—incorporates classical Italian features (Landry says he added a bit of "architectural playfulness"), while Behnke's interiors embrace the Art Deco style.

In the foyer (above), a table from Gregorius Pineo displays 1920s and '30s Lalique vases found on one of several buying trips the designer and the owners took to France. "The iron doors are based on a beautiful French Art Deco design we spotted in Paris," says Behnke. The balustrade and windows in the entrance hall (right) repeat the same motif, which is complemented by a hand-finished scalloped plaster wall treatment. Dale Chihuly's green-glass reeds rise near the stairway, while a 7-foot-tall, 400-pound bronze chandelier by Hervé van der Straeten hovers over the space.

In and Out | "We love to entertain family and friends and host charity and political events, so we designed the house to accommodate intimate gatherings as well as large groups," says the husband. "There is a comfortable flow from room to room, and between the living room and the loggia [both shown on previous spread]," adds the wife.

Behnke, who notes that "the clients love Deco but preferred not to limit the design," chose more contemporary furnishings for the living room (foreground of previous spread), including sofas and chairs of her own design, a Tai Ping silk rug, Hervé van der Straeten pendant lamps, and a matte-finish S.L.ED piano by Karl Lagerfeld for Steinway & Sons. An untitled 1947 oil painting by Hans Hofmann hangs above the fireplace, whose marble Art Deco mantelpiece surrounds a firebox attributed to Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann. Another Ruhlmann pattern inspired the mahogany-and-walnut parquetry. "The living room is a spectacular showcase of design, materials, art, and furniture, while at the same time [it is] inviting and warm," says the husband.

Accordion doors along the living room's back wall open to the stone-paved loggia (above), which retains a sense of formality but is decidedly more casual. Before the limestone mantelpiece, which the designer found in Paris, is iron furniture from Janus et Cie. The chandelier and sconces are from Gregorius Pineo, and the lantern over the dining table was crafted after wall lanterns from Amy Perlin Antiques. To counterbalance the serious columns and arches with a sense of whimsy, Behnke had draperies made from a bold dark-brown-and-cream-striped outdoor fabric from Donghia. In one corner is a bronze, *Happy Children*, by Chaim Gross.

Book Matched | Lacewood paneling and shelves line the library (above), which is filled with the owners' extensive collection of books. "I'm an avid reader and student of philosophy and Jewish law, and we've also collected art and important Judaica, sculptures, and mineral specimens for over 40 years," says the husband. "We required a large library, which is my sanctuary, and plenty of space to display our cherished collections." Above the marble fireplace (another Paris find) is a 1960s oil on canvas by Mordecai Ardon; a nearby recess holds Marc Chagall's circa-1980 *Moise et le Veau d' Or*. "The client was able to visualize the spaces by memorizing the dimensions of each room to ensure that they were well proportioned," recalls Behnke. "It became a running joke with him that he knew the dimensions of the rooms better than [we did]."

Paneling also lines the nearby powder room (left), one of the home's 15 bathrooms. In concert with the Macassar ebony, burled walnut, and gray limestone of the sink cabinet, the mahogany wall pieces, with their different finishes, create a compelling interplay of textures, shapes, and shades.

Modern Family

The homeowners requested plenty of space to accommodate their family, which includes 13 grandchildren ranging from ages 2 to 16. "We needed more room for our growing family; during this journey, five grandchildren were added to the eight we had," notes the wife. The team responded with a comfortable yet graceful family room (above) that prominently displays a 1,000-gallon saltwater aquarium from Fish by Design; the tank, filled with vibrantly colored coral, is set into the room's dark-stained white-oak wall. Behnke designed the informal sofa and leather ottoman.

The dining room (left), which looks out on the front garden, is where the family gathers for formal meals. A bronze-and-lacquered-wood chandelier by Hervé van der Straeten hangs above a custom racetrack table by Behnke; surrounding the table are Therien chairs upholstered in Jerry Pair leather and two host's chairs Behnke designed especially for the couple. Moise Kisling's 1942 *Grand Bouquet de Mimosas* hangs on a fabric-upholstered wall with lacewood-paneled corners, between a pair of antique wall sconces from Craig Van Den Brulle. This room, like every room in the home, is "a jaw-dropper," says the husband.

Shine and Dine

For the kitchen (above), "Richard [Landry] had some very creative ideas," says the wife. "It's a wonderful space that can accommodate several preparation areas simultaneously and doesn't feel crowded." Landry designed the stainless-steel, barrel-vaulted ceiling, whose brilliance is offset by the mahogany cabinetry and kosher granite countertops that Finton and Behnke sourced in Italy. "The wife expresses her love for her family through food and cooking," says the designer. "Thus it was very important for the kitchen to work efficiently. We spent weeks making sure that all the details were specifically catered to her needs."

That attention to detail continues in the breakfast room (right), on the garden side of the kitchen, where a chandelier from Jean de Merry hangs above a Behnke-designed table and Michael Berman chairs. The sheer draperies are from Pierre Frey, and the shades, which are motorized, are from Conrad. "The breakfast room is also spacious and looks out to the garden, pool, and water features, adding to the inside-outside feel of the house," says the wife.

Inner Light | Paying homage to early Italian architecture, Landry designed a groin-vaulted ceiling for the second-floor stair hall and wrapped it around a central terrace. "The terrace is a great way to bring light into the galleries," says Landry. "The family can open the doors before bed to bring in fresh air and connect to the outdoors. It is a protected space—a private courtyard open to the sky." The courtyard "is a very special and integral part of the upstairs area," says the husband. "It's a wonderful, peaceful, serene space." A water feature, he says, "adds so much to the relaxing ambience." The detailing on the steel doors and windows, which were fabricated in Ojai, Calif., echoes the groin vault. The furniture that graces the terrace is from Janus et Cie.

Behnke had the interior corridors' wool-and-silk runners made in grays and silvers by Martin Patrick Evan to bring in a modern vibe; by contrast, the hanging fixtures from Delisle recall old European design. Achieving such a cohesive synthesis of classic Italian, Art Deco, and contemporary styles here and throughout the home "was no minor feat," the husband says, "but [it was] accomplished in a seamless, magical way."

Suite Dreams | The terrace's French doors (previous page) are opposite the entry doors of the master suite (this spread). The architect softened the master sitting room (above) and the master bedroom (above right) with barrel-vaulted ceilings featuring the same scalloped finish found on the walls of the entrance hall. "When you light the ceiling properly, it's just magical," Landry says. Two sets of French doors in the bedroom open onto a trellised terrace overlooking the backyard. "The large terrace provides a contemplative space enhanced by the property's tree line, which hides all the neighboring houses," notes the wife. The bedroom and sitting room, she points out, can be joined or separated via a large pocket door as desired: "We wanted to be able to close off the sitting area from the bedroom in case one of us wants to read or watch television while the other sleeps."

Treasures from the couple's travels enliven the sitting room. The antique burled-walnut side tables, the Murano-glass sconces, and the rosewood desk and its lamp, which is attributed to Jacques Adnet, all came from Paris, as did the vintage amber glass vases on the mantel. Finton went to great lengths to find the marble for the interior and hearth extension of the fireplace, which he faced in mirrored panels, and for which Behnke designed an iron fire screen. "Once the clients saw the marble, which came from Italy's Tuscan coast, they wanted to use more, but only one small block existed," he explains. "I went on a cruise with my family to the same area, and I had to get off the boat for a few days and take a slight excursion. I bought the only remaining pieces."

Similar care was taken with the master bathrooms. For her bath (near left), the design team devised a mix of luminous tones and mirrors, and repeated the scalloping around the tub and vanity. "We made curves a focus in this room," says Landry. In a nod to the wife's fashion savvy, the design of the stone-and-Italian-glass mosaic floor is based on a Carolina Herrera embroidered skirt. Those forms repeat in the metalwork on the skylight, from which hangs an antique Lalique chandelier. "At night, that space is illuminated, making the whole ceiling glow," says Landry. The fabric on the Roman shade is from Schumacher, the trim from Rose Tarlow.

His bath (far left), which also has an antique Lalique chandelier, is enveloped in mahogany with inlaid lacewood diamond accents. The gray marble for the floors and countertop was obtained during a buying trip to Italy. The custom bronze fixtures are from Compas, the countertop accessories are from Ann Sacks, and the vase is from Robert Kuo.

All Aboard | "We created special spaces for [our grandchildren] to make their visits fun," says the wife. "The basement is geared more to the older children." The basement's game room (this spread), which has a 1930s ship theme, includes air hockey and pool tables, games tables, and a galley bar for the grown-ups—all beneath a decorative ceiling structure of steel I-beams. An École des Beaux-Arts–trained French muralist, Paulin Paris, painted the side wall's seascape.

For the seating area, Behnke conceived the sofa, which is covered in a hardy fabric from Gretchen Bellinger, and four swivel lounge chairs, which are upholstered in a stripe from Romo. Snack trays held in place on an oversize ottoman by canvaslike linen straps add a nautical touch. In view of the seating area (but not shown here) is an entertainment system with video-game consoles and a large flat-panel television. The rope chandeliers are from Christian Astuguevieille, and the floor lamps are from Holly Hunt.

From the games room, a biometrically controlled glass door leads to the spa—"aka the wow room," says the wife. The spa (following spread) contains an Endless pool, as well as a hot tub with waterfall set in a recess tiled by Vita Nova Mosaic; a salon, a massage room, and a steam room are located behind doors adorned with convex mirrors. The Deco-era theme continues in the travertine-floored space with framed circa-1930s bathing suits from American Garage and sleek deck furniture from Sutherland covered in water-resistant fabric from Perennials. Another Landry-designed barrel-vaulted ceiling, covered in Ann Sacks tile, follows the rectangular cast of the pool. The chandeliers and sconces are from Bourgeois Boheme.

Scene and Heard | The theater evokes a more classical ambience than the whimsical game room, but the homeowners' grandchildren do not seem to mind. "The children especially look forward to seeing movies in here," the wife says. Outfitted by Los Angeles–based Robert's Home Audio and Video, the basement room houses cleverly concealed technical elements; speakers, subwoofers, and acoustic panels, for example, are hidden behind a Suzani-pattern fabric from Donghia. The wall textile's round patterns play off of the circles in the mahogany ceiling, which required 1,100 hours of labor to build. Behind the leather seating from CinemaTech are Behnke-designed cabinets of Macassar ebony and mahogany; fronting the cabinets are Ultrasuede panels with nailhead trim patterns that complement the Art Deco–style lines of the side lights and wood details. Robert Kuo modified the lamps, making them smaller especially for the space, and the draperies were made from Sandra Jordan fabric with passementerie from Samuel & Sons. Rounding out the technical aspects are a Runco high-definition projector, a 170-inch-wide curved Stewart screen, and a custom shallow speaker system by California Audio Technology.