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THIS NEW CALIFORNIA HOME **PAYS HOMAGE** TO ITS OLD TREES AND ESTABLISHED NEIGHBORHOOD

BY CANDACE ORD MANROE AND DARRA BAKER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KARYN R. MILLET

PRODUCED BY DARRA BAKER

Century-old sycamores shading the home of Debbie and Marty Adelstein in Los Angeles's Brentwood neighborhood are no aesthetic accident. They are at the root of both the architecture and interior design—and the house's one great deception. Mother Nature's venerable, long-limbed beauties suggest that what is actually new construction has, like them, mellowed into life's gloaming.

"The genesis of the house's design really came from those five or six 100-year-old sprawling sycamore trees—the most wonderful thing on the property," confirms architect Tom Proctor, who aspired to a settled-in, 1930s look for the new house he designed for the Adelsteins and their three daughters. "We did not want to disturb the trees, but use them," he says. Not only do the sycamores anchor the house in history, they shaped it, determining placement of an ell in the back.

Debbie and Marty opted to raze the property's existing structure and rebuild from scratch only after accepting that it made better sense (and cents). A sculptor married to a TV and

A golden marble insert in the living room fireplace surround offers warmth and mimics the style of admired '30s Hollywood architect Paul Williams. Debbie Adelstein's bronzes are displayed on a coffee table and on the mantel. **Opposite:** Architect Tom Proctor's new design looks vintage. **Preceding page:** The foyer's refined millwork creates character.

Tied back at hip level, the dining room's damask draperies are pleated in proportion to the moldings and hang heavy with a weighty lining. The rods, brackets, finials, and rings are all custom, as are the rugs. A bespoke mahogany Chippendale-style table in a high-wax finish is rendered less formal by the striped backing on the chairs.

Sophisticated kitchen cabinetry intersects smoothly with millwork in the rest of the house. **Left:** Outfitted with vintage furniture and a teak console, this loggia opens onto the living and dining rooms and a hallway. **Below:** Debbie and Marty Adelstein with daughter Sara. **Lower left:** A second loggia is off the family room.

film producer, Debbie desired a home elegant for entertaining yet easy for their family. It couldn't look shiny-new. The L.A. natives turned to Proctor to dovetail the new construction into the older neighborhood; then they called on interior designer Joan Behnke to enhance the architecture with timeless design.

"Debbie and Marty wanted us to make their home formal yet livable, warm, and intimate," Behnke says. "They wanted it to function for parties for 100 people, and also for a family of five."

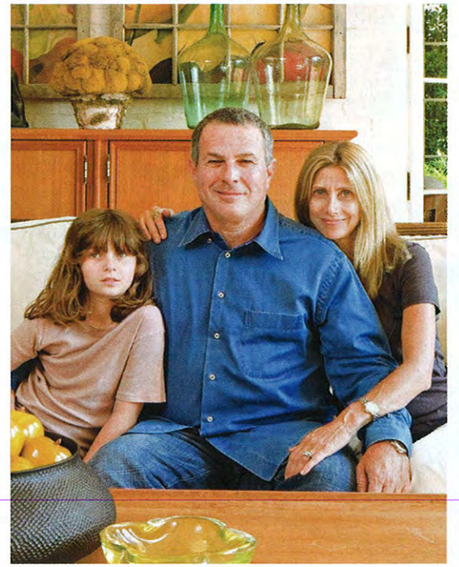
A formal entry with a winding staircase creates an elegant first impression. The dining room continues the formal theme with couture-inspired draperies that suggest waltzing the night away, against a backdrop of scenic de Gournay wallpaper. "The wallpaper brings the outside in with its flora and fauna," notes Behnke. "It, along with the celadon-painted wainscoting, makes the room timeless, so you can't pinpoint exactly when it was done." Plus, the exquisite pastel palette resonates as more friendly than formal—not even off-limits to the family's yellow Lab.

To defuse the Chippendale-style table's formality, Behnke covered dining chairs in cream-colored leather with a fun cream-and-khaki stripe on the back. Should any chill remain, a classical fluted fireplace helps to shake it off. "I love to walk around by myself in here at night and feel like a princess," says Debbie. "It's beautiful without being grand."

In the living room, demilunes and gilt mirrors formally flank the fireplace for sophistication. Yet stuffiness is sidestepped with abundant light, youthful color, and eminent comfort. Airy livability begins at the tall French doors and arched window that frame views of the old sycamores. The garden views inspired Behnke's palette. Bracing chartreuse draperies—heavily lined for weight—play off subtle butter-yellow walls, and variations of green appear throughout the room and home.

"The fabrics are about comfort and usability. They're simple, elegant, and timeless without being fussy. The sofa is a rich shade of brown, like that of the California brown bear," says the designer. Moreover, adds Debbie, "it's a good color for entertaining. You don't worry about guests sipping red wine."

Antique accessories, including blue-and-white Chinese export porcelain, team with Debbie's own bronze sculptures to imbue



The master suite's bed features a pleated back drapery plus a fringed valance and side panels for a canopied effect. **Right:** The side panels' patterned lining is repeated at the windows. **Top right:** Detailed millwork continues in the bathroom.

the room with a personal, collected look. "Joan's design makes the house more about us than it is about her," praises Debbie.

Modern kitchens can be bugaboos when the goal is a vintage style, but not here. The kitchen cabinets relate architecturally to the more formal spaces for visual continuity. Coffered ceilings in two loggias also bring architectural detailing outdoors. The family room departs from the formal millwork, but not from a sense of history. Its paneling "suggests that California ranch feeling of beadboard that has been painted over for years and years to create a sense of evolutionary history," Behnke explains.

Soothing celadon ensures a smooth transition to the master bedroom. "The thought was how to make the room feel like a sanctuary, a quiet place to catch your breath," says Behnke.

It's not just the bedroom that provides a sense of escape. "Every time we come home, it feels like we're on vacation," declares Debbie. What better place to plant roots than that?

Architect: Tom Proctor **Interior designer:** Joan Behnke
Landscape design: Maureen Barnes
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