

LOS ANGELES

luxe.

interiors + design®



STORYBOOK CHARM

A COUPLE RETURN TO THE BEL-AIR HOME THEY NEARLY BOUGHT DECADES EARLIER, SMITTEN WITH THE BREEZY SERENITY IT WOULD BRING TO THEIR LATEST CHAPTER IN LIFE.

WRITTEN BY JENNIFER SERGENT
PHOTOGRAPHY BY TREVOR TONDRO

INTERIOR DESIGN / PAUL VINCENT WISEMAN, BRENDA MICKEL AND
JESSICA REDONDO, THE WISEMAN GROUP INTERIOR DESIGN



Interior designer Paul Vincent Wiseman refers to “the long body of our memory”—a metaphor he uses to describe his work at the Bel-Air home of longtime clients. As he puts it, “We bring our past and our future simultaneously to a place. I’m pulling the house from the past but also projecting it into the future.” The past of which he speaks is the ornate Beaux Arts home on San Francisco’s Nob Hill that he decorated for these clients, and the future is the home in Bel-Air that looks nothing like it.

Actress Judy Garland originally commissioned the house from architect Wallace Neff in 1938. It is airy and open, situated on 2 1/2 acres with a pool and writer’s cabin in back; and though the exterior exudes old-line East Coast style, the interior layout is classic L.A. casual. The owners had considered buying it in the mid-1970s before decamping to San Francisco to work and raise two daughters—they bought it on the spot when it came back on the market shortly after they retired and returned south. “I walked in and fell in love,” the husband says. “It almost took my breath away.” Adds the wife: “It had been beautifully restored. You feel the serenity as you walk in.”

The owners had no problem abandoning their Beaux Arts aesthetic—and many precious antiques—to create a new environment. “We love good design and what’s appropriate for a place,” the wife says. “Nob Hill felt like a Parisian apartment, but what was right for Nob Hill isn’t right for L.A.—in a canyon, with a more casual lifestyle.” To that end, they instructed the San Francisco-based Wiseman, along with design principal Brenda Mickel and associate design principal Jessica Redondo, to go where the house led them. “Because we trust Paul completely, we gave him no directive,” the wife says. “We asked him to tell the story of the house.”

The story had already begun with the previous owner’s beautiful renovations to the kitchen and bathrooms, and all the rooms were painted pearly gray, which provided a

pleasing neutral setting for the team to move forward. “It was in perfect condition,” Wiseman says. Mickel agrees. “We didn’t have to change anything,” she says, “which is incredibly unusual for our firm.” The designers added to the foundation by using gauzy linen Roman shades throughout the house to establish a visual flow and sisal rugs with Ultrasuede grid lines that connect the spaces in the first-floor rooms. “It was a detail as well to add that trim so it wasn’t a vast amount of sisal,” Redondo says. The color scheme emerged from those gray walls and the wife’s collection of pale pink, blue and celadon vases that came from Nob Hill and now grace the master bedroom mantel. “They were in these dreamy colors, so we just built around that,” Mickel says.

Wiseman’s “long body of our memory” perspective informed how the home would be furnished. Antiques that made the cut from San Francisco were used sparingly in the new interiors, and the furnishings that survived were reupholstered in glazed linens. “All the new furniture was very contemporary, and all the old furniture was covered in contemporary fabrics,” Wiseman says. Most of the new furnishings are custom—the curved seating in the home’s prominent bay windows and the modern sectional and stitched-leather coffee table in the sun room—while the owners’ surviving antiques get top billing wherever they are placed. The deep honeyed finish on matching antique rosewood chairs in the living room, for example, stands sharply in contrast to the pale linens around them. “We tried to use fewer antiques but let them be special, so they would stand out as sculpture,” Wiseman says. The same idea applies to the foyer’s 19th-century French commode topped with two stark-white plaster lamps in the style of Giacometti. A gilded Japanese screen in the dining room, meanwhile, looks across the room—and the centuries—to a grid of Marc Chagall prints, all of them grounded with Madeline Stuart chairs sporting pared-down neoclassical silhouettes. “We took their traditional roots and peeled them back,” Redondo says of the effect. Likewise, in the master bedroom, Wiseman upholstered a four-poster bed and the owners’ existing armchair in linens, bringing a set of English nesting tables into focus—just enough of a traditional touch but not too much.

As for the home’s own place in Hollywood lore and architectural pedigree, Wiseman says that Neff’s layout was a joy to work with. “He understood proportions beautifully, and he got that storybook ambience down,” the interior designer says. But the only spirit inhabiting the house belongs to the owner. “You feel a lot of glamour in this house,” Mickel says, “but that really stems from the wife—she’s a really understated, glamorous woman.” ■

“WE BRING OUR PAST
AND OUR FUTURE
SIMULTANEOUSLY
TO A PLACE.”

—PAUL VINCENT WISEMAN

A bronze by Stephen De Staebler from Dolby Chadwick Gallery in San Francisco occupies a niche within a 1938 Wallace Neff-designed residence. Forming a seamless foundation in the home, San Francisco designer Paul Vincent Wiseman placed Merida sisal rugs, fabricated by J&M Carpets with Élitis trim, throughout.





Prints of black-and-white botanical photography by Karl Blossfeldt from Vandeuren Galleries on the sun room walls offer a modern twist on the artistic color renderings found in more traditional garden rooms. The antique Gustavian chairs are from Lief.



Opposite: In a living room seating area, Wiseman hung his clients' collection of contemporary works by Jean-Marc Louis over a circa-1910 Gustavian-style bench from Lief, which he re-covered in linen by Kerry Joyce. The garden stools are from Forgotten Shanghai in San Francisco.



Below: Soft gray linen wallcovering by Rogers & Goffigon envelops the wife's Deco-style office, where a desk by Studio Workshops, with a chair from Blackman Cruz, forms the focal point. The alabaster lamp is by Baker, as is the wool-and-silk area rug, while the A. Rudin lounge chair wears a Beacon Hill velvet; the 1920s plaster relief panels are from Lief.

“ALL THE NEW FURNITURE WAS VERY CONTEMPORARY, AND ALL THE OLD FURNITURE WAS COVERED IN CONTEMPORARY FABRICS.”

—PAUL VINCENT WISEMAN

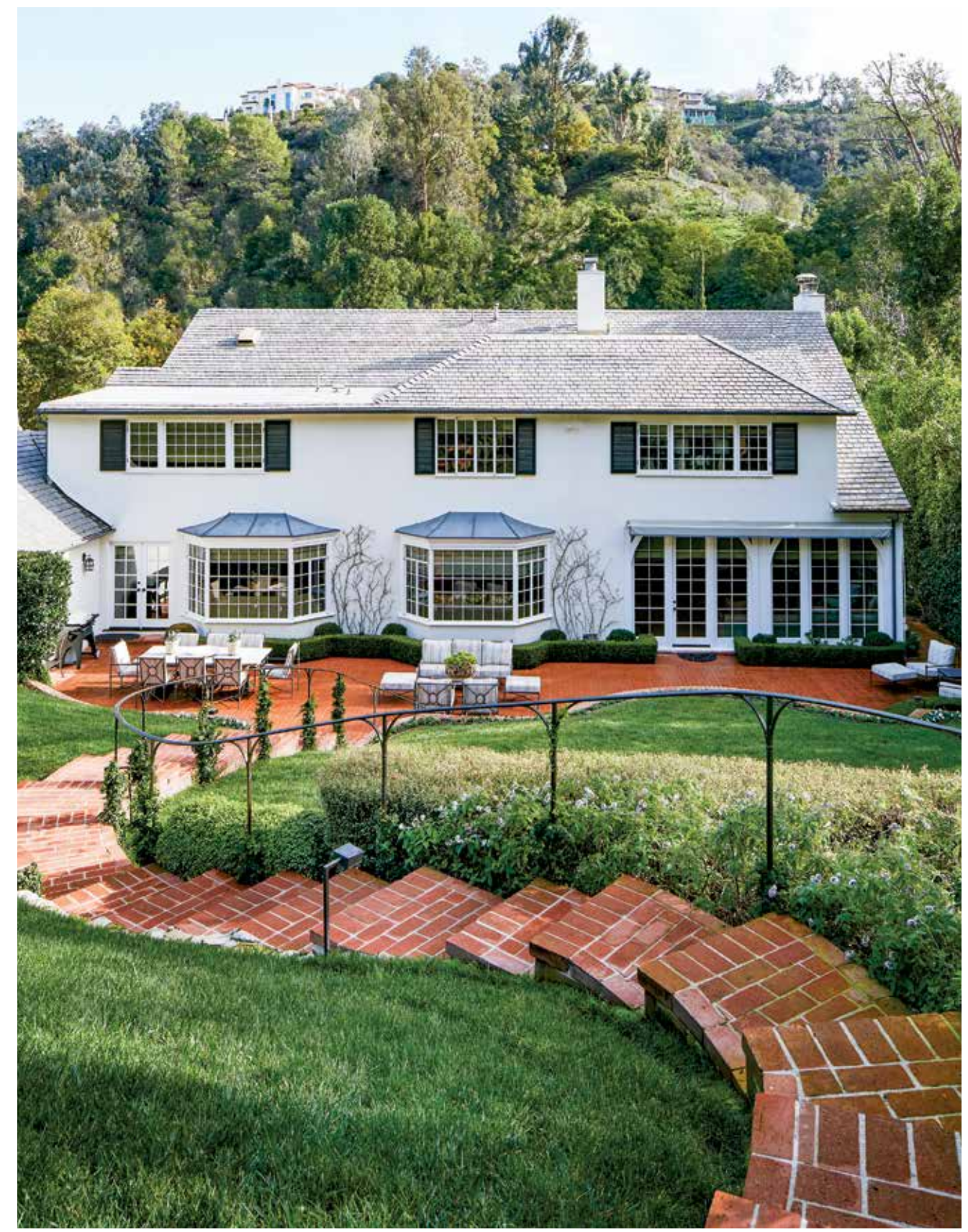


Sheer Roman shades in a Rogers & Goffigon fabric with Rose Tarlow Melrose House trim grace the sun room windows. The custom sectional is in a Giant linen; the custom ottoman's top is stitched in a pattern that matches its diamond-shaped wood base. Adding a whimsical touch is the sconce from Coup D'Etat in San Francisco.



Opposite: The home, commissioned from Neff by Judy Garland when the actress was just 17, includes a writer's cabin at the back of the property. The charming retreat overlooking the pool area now functions as the husband's home office.

Below: With the home having been thoughtfully restored before the clients' purchase, Wiseman and his design team changed only the railing along the steps in the backyard, leaving the existing brick paving and landscape intact. The owners re-covered the outdoor furnishings, which came with the house, in fabric from RH.





A pedestal table from Sarlo in San Francisco is central to the breakfast area, where Valley Drapery and Upholstery covered the custom banquette with chenille fabric by Glant; joining the arrangement are RH dining chairs. The owners purchased the ceramics from artist Kris Cox in Aspen, Colorado.

The kitchen had already been renovated when Wiseman's clients moved in; he merely added the window treatments, circa-1930 English pendant lights from BK Antiques in New York—with canopies and stems fabricated by Reborn Antiques—and Altura Furniture counter stools.





Opposite: A wall-mounted antique screen from Imari in Sausalito, California, anchors the dining room and hangs above the sideboard from M.S. Rau Antiques in New Orleans. The crystal-cube chandelier by Circa Lighting suspends over the dining table and chairs by Madeline Stuart.

Below: A console with sea-serpent-form supports from the owners' previous residence stands against a family room wall. Joining the vignette are a collection of books and a framed Robert Mapplethorpe photograph from Baldwin Gallery in Aspen.





Above: Wiseman and his designers paired a chair by Rose Tarlow Melrose House with the master bathroom's built-in vanity. A white alabaster lamp from Duane Modern in New York sits next to the wife's mirror and perfumes.

Left: The Wiseman Group upholstered a custom four-poster bed in glazed linen by Rose Tarlow Melrose House for the master bedroom; Jasper fabric dresses the lounge chair, an existing piece. The antique vases on the mantel inspired the home's color palette, and the framed drawing by Louise Nevelson is among the owners' many works by the artist.

THE WISEMAN GROUP INTERIOR DESIGN, INC.

301 Pennsylvania Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94107
415 282 2880

CONTACT@WISEMANGROUP.COM

REPRINTED FROM



luxe.
interiors + design®

For more information about *Luxe Interiors + Design*™, visit us at luxesource.com

Content for this brochure has been reprinted and/or repurposed from Luxe Interiors + Design™ magazine with the express permission of its publisher. © 2017 SANDOW. All rights reserved.