

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

THE INTERNATIONAL DESIGN AUTHORITY

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An Exclusive Tour of the Star's Bel Air Estate



The
Private World
of
**Elizabeth
Taylor**

Hollywood Remake

Blessed with a star-studded history, a Holmby Hills residence is razed, rebuilt, and made more gracious than ever by architect Oscar Shamamian

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Designer Lauren King (above) worked with Ferguson & Shamamian Architects to renovate her Los Angeles home. **RIGHT:** On the loggia, a Treillage mirror reflects a vintage pendant light from Ann-Morris Antiques; the lantern sconce is from Nathan Turner. The chairs at far right have cushions of Perennials outdoor fabric. For details see Sources.





FROM TOP: Curtains of Scalamandrè silk and custom-made seating furnish the living room. A pair of George II gilt-wood mirrors in the manner of William Kent, circa 1745, flank the entrance to the room; the Savonnerie carpet is from Mansour.





The Hollywood Regency façade of the King house.

In 1938,

the developer of a grand Hollywood Regency mansion in the Holmby Hills enclave of Los Angeles printed up a circular that advertised, among other selling points, the neighbors: “Miss Claudette Colbert, Miss Raquel Torres, Miss Irene Dunne, Mr. Walter Wanger.” Ah, the fine art of moving L.A. real estate. The tactic worked, luring a buyer who would turn out to be as celebrated as anyone else on the block—the singer, actress, and comedienne Fanny Brice. And Brice was just the first in the home’s lineup of show-business residents, which would include recording executive Jerome Moss (the M in A & M Records), film producer Alan Ladd Jr.,

and the house’s current owners, Lauren and Richard King and their 15-year-old son, Bobby—Richard being a founding partner of the television syndication company King World Productions.

Lauren keeps a hardbound history of the residence (a gift from the previous owners) in her elegant two-story entrance hall. An interior designer by training, she is well versed in its various incarnations. “Sandra and Jerry Moss put in the great room,” she says, “and the Ladds did a complete makeover.” But it’s the Ziegfeld Follies girl and *Baby Snooks Show* star who most intrigues Lauren. “Fanny Brice had a screening room on the other side of the living room,” she says. “I’ve heard she had the most exquisite taste. I have a feeling the house was fantastic when she lived here.” It was in the interest of restoring some of the property’s faded glamour that, shortly after acquiring it, the Kings hired New York-based Ferguson & Shamamian Architects to carry out what all involved parties expected to be a minor interior renovation.

“As things evolved it became a more complex situation,” is Oscar Shamamian’s delicate gloss on the comprehensive reconstruction



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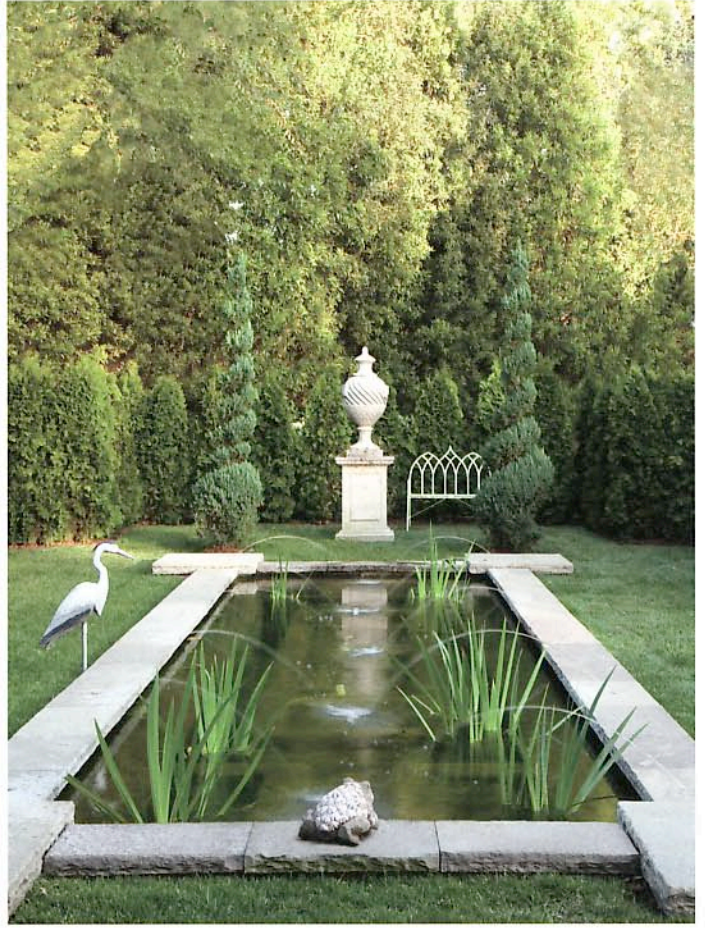
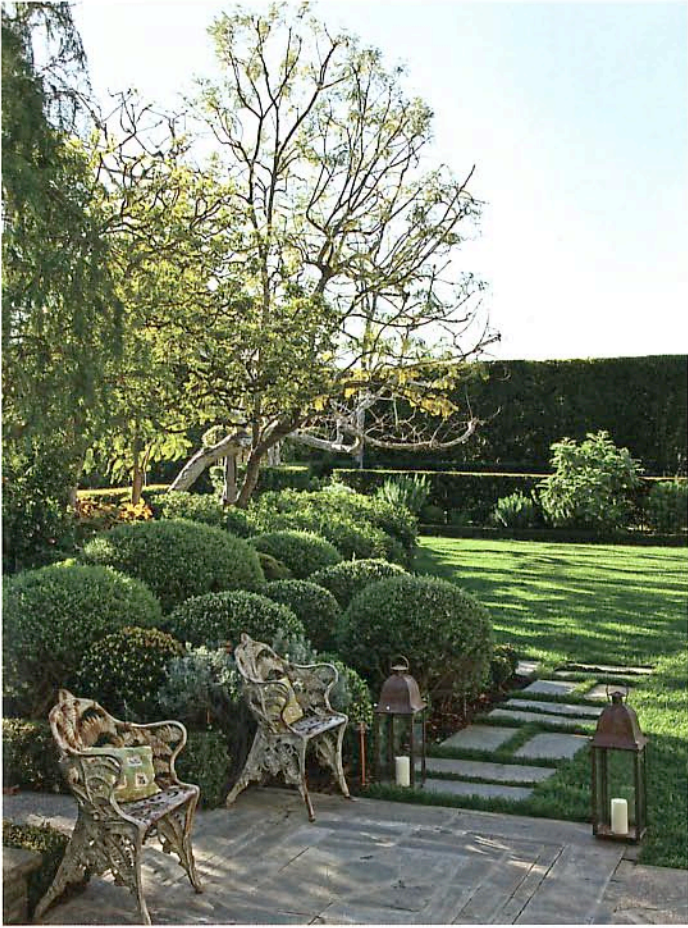


CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: In the dining room, Chippendale chairs found in London surround a circa-1780 mahogany pedestal table; the Regency-period crystal chandelier and massive mid-18th-century breakfront are both from Kentshire, and the antique Tabriz carpet

is from Mansour. The kitchen’s pot rack and pendant lights, all by Ann-Morris Antiques, are installed over counters of Calacatta Sponda marble. The dining room is lined with a hand-painted scenic wall covering; the gilt-wood console from Niall Smith holds Chinese-export porcelain.

A circa-1600 Flemish tapestry, purchased by the Kings in Paris, conceals the great room's projection screen. A cache of barge ware ceramics is displayed on a nearby table; the custom-made chaise longue is covered in Claremont fabric, and the Sultanabad carpet is from Mansour.







OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A terrace furnished with cast-iron seating from Anthony Garden Boutique leads to the lawn of the two-acre property, which was landscaped by Nancy Goslee Power. Bluestone coping surrounds the koi pond. The family room features an English tray table from John Rosselli Antiques and spool chairs covered in a ribbon stripe by Pierre Frey; on the shelves are Palissy ware plates.

ABOVE: In a guest room lined with a collection of red clothbound books, the Robert Kime light fixture is from John Rosselli & Assoc. and the window treatments are made of French textiles; the sofa is covered with a suzani from Uzbekistan. Custom-embroidered bed linens are paired with a floral quilt.

the house ultimately underwent. Because the existing rafters and supporting walls couldn't bear the weight of a replacement for the aging slate roof, "it all came down," Shamamian says—"except for the front façade you see propped up in the picture." The picture in question, a copy of which is in the Kings' hardbound book, shows the house looking as flimsy as a film set, its handsome brick face, quoins and all, braced by a series of thin wood supports. While the front of the residence, its grand curving entry stair, and the foundation were the only things the architects saved, they did manage to replicate the footprints of some of the original rooms. The biggest change was an addition to the rear of the house that includes a family room on the ground floor and a new guest room upstairs. Other improvements, Shamamian explains, focused on "bringing the interiors up to the level of work you saw on the outside"—raising the ceilings slightly, amplifying the architectural details, refining the finishes.

Lauren originally intended to leave the decoration of the 17,000-square-foot home to someone else, but, she confesses, "I started looking at designers and realized it would be too difficult

Oscar Shamamian collaborated with King on the design of the woodwork and marble detail in her master bath. An antique Swedish alabaster pendant light hangs above the inlaid floor, and the armchair is from Stair & Co.



The master bedroom features an antique mahogany four-poster; the valances and bed skirt were custom made by Chelsea Editions. The Regency settee is covered in silk velvet.



for anyone to work with me.” So she spent the better part of five years putting together rooms “that would house my collections and be very understated and very elegant.” The collections are copious and far-ranging—blue-and-white porcelain, contemporary art, wood hatmakers’ molds, Oriental rugs, Palissy ware, barge ware, taxidermy owls. But the burnished Georgian antiques throughout the residence announce Lauren’s most consuming passion. “I am *addicted* to 18th-century English furniture,” she declares, without a trace of remorse.

The dwelling’s informal L-shaped layout encouraged both the architects and the designer to “change channels a bit from room to room,” as Shamamian puts it. From the proper dining room on one side of the entrance hall, a visitor passes through a sequence of more casual spaces: a sunny breakfast room; a comfortable new family room, where spool chairs and floral linens play off chocolate-brown walls courtesy of local color guru Scott Flax; and, finally, a white-painted porch overlooking a burbling koi pond. To the other side of the entrance, the living room, with its crisp white dentil

molding and neoclassical furniture, is calm and restrained, while the great room, which has a cove ceiling and walnut paneling and columns, is the showpiece of the house. At one end of the cavernous space hangs a 17th-century Flemish tapestry the Kings picked up on their honeymoon in Paris; push a button on the Crestron remote control and the textile rises to reveal a projection screen fit for a television mogul (no doubt Fanny Brice would approve).

After the great room, Richard’s favorite retreat is the garden, a two-acre Arcadia conceived by renowned L.A. landscape designer Nancy Goslee Power. On the fringes of a broad, sycamore-shaded lawn, Power fashioned a series of romantic outdoor rooms, including the pond area off the porch, sunken gardens around the cupolaed poolhouse added by Ferguson & Shamamian, and extensive rose and vegetable beds behind the tennis court. “It looks like the Garden of Eden when it’s really going,” Lauren boasts of the vegetable plot. “We have the best tomatoes in L.A.” Which alone may justify the claim on the original builder’s flyer: “The value offered here will cause you the utmost happiness.” □