



The Softer Side

Set high above L.A.'s Sunset Boulevard, a formerly hard-edge home revels in a textile-rich makeover.

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On first glimpse, designer Suzanne Tucker gleaned exactly what her clients' new Bel Air abode was missing: a glamour befitting the illustrious West Los Angeles neighborhood, once

home to Zsa Zsa Gabor and Elizabeth Taylor. "It had a lot of hard surfaces and it just needed to feel more sumptuous, more seductive," she says. "It needed some softness underfoot."

The home, designed by South African architecture firm SAOTA, is an ode to spectacular hilltop open-air living. It embodies a quintessential L.A. lifestyle that Bay Area-based Tucker appreciated and acknowledged, even while she set about transforming its voluminous interior spaces into more intimate settings. "Large volumes can be intimidating and people often assume that one room has to have just one sitting area, but that's not the case," the designer explains, adding that she drew on her early days working with legendary California designer Michael Taylor for the inspiration to "create spaces within spaces." With the help of Westlake Village firm All Coast Construction, Tucker refinished floors and reconfigured ceilings with additional lighting to fit her new furniture plans. "We needed to create destinations within the large areas, defining each with furnishings and light," she says. "It's important to bring in tactile elements for a nicer human experience, but it's also crucial to consider the intangibles—lighting, auditory elements, even fragrance—that make a space inviting."

To ensure that the new decor was a perfect fit, Tucker custom-designed most of the upholstered pieces throughout the house. "Rooms can be any color of the rainbow, but if you don't get the scale and proportion right, it all goes off," she warns. "You want a house to work for guests but also for two. Your home shouldn't feel vacuous or leave you feeling lonely." To that end, she divided the vast space of the main living room into two seating groups grounded by similar pale blue rugs. One arrangement is set deeper within the house and defined by large fishtail palm trees, Art Deco-style mirrors and paintings by Petra Cortright and Chris Trueman; the other, akin to the prow of a ship, opens to the pool terrace and the lawn

via retractable glass doors. Tucker also opted for snugly chenille and textured bouclé fabrics as well as curving forms, like the round glass globes of the living room's double chandeliers. "I didn't want anything spiky or unfriendly," she notes. "The strong geometric lines of the architecture benefited from the juxtaposition of softened curves."

In the dining room, a bleached-walnut oval table and plush chairs add to the sinuous feel. Because the screening room is mere steps away, Tucker kept its palette light, too, lining the walls with a subtle Suzani woven pattern. "It's in keeping with the colors of the house, which are taken from the sky—daylight and clouds, sunrises and sunsets," she says. "There's nothing jarring here." She did enrich the hues for the couple's bedroom, though, bringing in blush pink tones. An antique Venetian-style mirror and a Roman marble bust of a goddess atop the credenza add an elegant note. "The challenge there, too, was to counter the hard surfaces—limestone floors and lots of glass—so we brought in a hand-tufted bamboo silk rug, bed linens with pearl gray embroidery and double layer curtains," the designer explains. The sheers allow an ethereal light to filter in without obstructing the view and the heavier drapery brings a sense of warmth. Reflecting on this indoor-outdoor house, Tucker is quick to remind Angelenos of just how fortunate they are. "People here forget that the rest of the world isn't like this. L.A. houses are so lucky to have these huge windows," she says.

The couple's existing art collection, which crosses all genres, was a particular delight for the designer. "It brings so much character and personality to the house," Tucker explains. She brought in even more art and *objets* to enhance the mix. Among them is a mounted ammonite, found on trip to England, as well as a sculptural fossil cluster. "They bring in a bit of ancient and crusty to balance all the sleek," she says. But the designer is perhaps most fond of the Hung Liu painting in the entryway. "The front door is glass, so you see it immediately, with its wonderfully welcoming red color," she enthuses. "It draws you into the home."

That allure is exactly what she had hoped to achieve. Gone is the chill of stone, steel and glass. "It's a very romantic house now," Tucker muses, "especially when its aglow at night." ■



Ushering guests in with a strong dose of color, a bright mixed media artwork by Hung Liu adorns this Bel Air home's airy foyer. Designer Suzanne Tucker paired rock crystal lamps by Craig Van Den Brulle with a console from Kneedler Fauchère, topped with a 1980s Murano glass mirror from Galerie Glustin in Paris.

A ceiling light from De Sousa Hughes in San Francisco hangs over an antique carpet from Woven.

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Anchored by custom seating, the interior portion of the great room includes a sofa upholstered with a Giant Textiles chenille, armchairs covered in a Theo chenille and an ottoman topped in leather from San Francisco's S.H. Frank & Co. Matching Jasper mirrors hang above a pair of consoles from R&Y Augousti in Paris. The rug is from Doris Leslie Blau in New York City and the floor lamps are by Phoenix Day. Barlas Baylar's Murano glass Valiant chandelier illuminates the room.



Above: On the pool-facing end of the great room, armchairs covered in a Jasper fabric by Chapas Textiles complete the custom seating ensemble. The coffee table is from Shears & Window in San Francisco, the table lamp is from Balsamo Antiques in New York City and the rug is from Doris Leslie Blau.

Opposite: A south-facing exterior deck with an infinity edge pool and a spa, topped by a striking 130-foot-long terrace canopy, provides expansive city views that stretch out to the Pacific.



Above: In the husband's office, a customized H  l  ne Aumont desk from Hewn in San Francisco is paired with an Eames desk chair from Design Within Reach. Tucker designed the guest chairs, upholstering them with a woven Giant Textiles fabric from Kneedler Fauch  re. The antique rug is from Mansour.

Opposite: Rose Tarlow Melrose House chairs with a Jasper fabric from Shears & Window surround the custom breakfast table. Two sculptural 1970s "Artichoke" chandeliers by Carlo Nason for Mazzega, from Collected by Agnes in the Netherlands, hang overhead; the 1920s painting of a woman in a Chinese court dress—part of the homeowners' collection—is by an unknown French artist.



Right: A custom marble-topped console marks the entrance to the husband's bathroom, which features a freestanding tub overlooking downtown Los Angeles. By its side is a walnut bench by Kerry Joyce.

Opposite: "The wife has a penchant for antiques," says Tucker, noting the Roman marble bust of a goddess, circa 1st-2nd century A.D., set atop a wood credenza from Shears & Window. The latter is where she also spotted the bench, now upholstered with a Sloan Miyasato damask. The mirror is from John Nelson Antiques and the lamp is from L'Antiquaire in Connecticut. Tucker paired Rogers & Goffigon sheers with drapery panels from Cowtan & Tout, adding a ceiling light from Liz O'Brien in New York City as a final touch.

