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THE WORLD OF INTERIORS

**RHYME, RESISTANCE
AND RIOTOUS DECOR**
Harlem Renaissance
poet's haven in Virginia



OAR INSPIRING

The ancient boatyard that made Venice great

In the 'outdoor living room', which is open to the garden, the 'Handkerchief' planters, containing ligularia, are by Swiss industrial designer Willy Guhl. The leather-and-wood slipper chairs come from JF Chen, an art/antique dealer in Los Angeles renowned for its stock of early Modern designers such as Eames, Prouvé and Jacobsen



Jeweller Nancy Newberg planned to build a U-shaped Spanish Revival home in California, but when her moment – her hacienda could also be minimalist, pattern-free and serene. And so it's turned out. Says



THE U IN EUREKA

decorator Kathryn Ireland took the jeweller to Axel Vervoordt's château in Belgium, she had a damascene the owner: 'Can you believe I used to be obsessed with majolica?' Text and photography: Tim Beddow



A SURPRISE birthday visit to Belgium seven years ago was the damascene moment for jewellery designer Nancy Newberg. She was curious about the work of antique dealer Axel Vervoordt, so Newberg's friend and long-time decorator, Kathryn Ireland, arranged a private visit to his château and Kanaal gallery, which had in turn once been her eureka moment. 'I found his pared-down simplicity, textures, colours and use of space had an extraordinary elegance,' says Nancy, 'and were elements that could happily blend within the structure of a Spanish Colonial Revival hacienda, which I had in mind to build.' On the same trip she stayed at Ett Hem, in Stockholm, an Arts and Crafts building designer Ilse Crawford had turned into a hotel, now renowned for its calm and graceful interiors. It reinforced her vision to create something *just so*. Or perhaps 'even more so'.

Other aspects in Nancy's life were in flux: her three adult boys had left home, making the previous house she built 'in a more embellished traditional Mediterranean style, for family use, appear as though it had outgrown itself'. So out went the Fortuny fabrics, in came a very few choice textiles – though certainly nothing with pattern. So Kathryn, whose distinctive schemes teem with bold, colourful motifs, found herself on the end of a tight leash. But having worked on similar projects in Sun Valley it wasn't entirely new territory for her. Nancy was

also after a serene environment in which to design. 'My tastes had changed,' she explains. 'I could sense a second chapter on the way, a wish to create something more adult.'

Born near Philadelphia, Nancy moved to the West Coast in 1980 to study fashion and has lived in Los Angeles since, marrying her childhood sweetheart there in 1985. Her fashion life was put on hold when children arrived, but her keen, not to say obsessive, interest in houses and design has been constant.

For this particular project, Nancy began research on the Spanish Revival – a hybrid style based on colonial buildings constructed

during the European settlement of the Americas – concentrating on Montecito, Santa Barbara, where architect George Washington Smith built a house in 1917 very much reflecting the farmhouses he had seen on a journey to Andalucía three years earlier. It was immediately celebrated, and Smith found he had any number of well-heeled local clients clamouring for similar homes. It unexpectedly kick-started an architectural style, characterised by Moorish inspired frillwork, thick white walls, arches, colonnades, tiled roofs and floors.

When a plot, just 200 metres from her existing house, was put up for sale five years ago Nancy was swift to secure it. The site, uniquely, had uninterrupted westerly views from a high ridge to the ocean in the distance. The nondescript mock-Tudor mansion was immediately





Opposite, top: in the living room, Kathryn Ireland found the two antique Italian mirrors flanking the glass pocket doors and designed the brass-framed marble-top low table. Bottom: for the front of the house, landscapers Stephen Block and Randie Rubaum replanted 100-year-old Sevillano olive trees transported from central California groves on flatbed trucks. This page: mid-20th-century Danish leather dining chairs by Jacob Kjær sit beneath glass designer Alison Berger's pulley pendants



This page, clockwise from top: in the kitchen, designed by Ron Radziner, hang Azucena's 'Boccia' ceiling lights with Murano crystal, found on a trip with Kathryn to Paris; the open shelves, arched doorways and wooden ceilings are nods to the Spanish Colonial Revival style; outside the breakfast room is a walled area with a rustic table from Obsolete and small stools bought at the Parma antique fair



Top: in the breakfast room, chairs from Nickey Kehoe surround a Saarinen 'Tulip' table. The photograph is by Seton Smith. Above left: Nancy's collection of Bruno Gambone ceramics is shelved either side of the fireplace, warming a pair of 1950s 'Spanish' chairs by Børge Mogensen. Above right: this long beamed clutter-free corridor runs along the front of the house exuding an air of monastic calm



Top: in the library, the Minotti chairs upholstered in a Rogers & Goffigon mohair fabric encircle a Kathryn Ireland-designed table. Above left: a 1968 Fontana Arte ceiling pendant hangs above a cluster of Palshus ceramics from Denmark. Above right: another alfresco dining area is graced with seating by Hans Wegner. Opposite: the 80-year-old *Washingtonia robusta* palms were on the site when Nancy bought the property. Inner Gardens moved them twice in order to save them. The stairs lead up to the main bedroom's terrace





razed; Nancy had done all her homework, had scrapbooks, tear-sheets and monographs with myriad sticky notes, so when the time came to design the house, her vision was clear. Kathryn was on board from day one, excited by the challenge 'to be able to adapt my palette in a constrained environment,' she explains. '[Nancy] wanted a refined minimalist interior but still wanted it to be decorated.'

Finding the right architect proved time-consuming, but Nancy alighted on Ron Radziner. His decision to update the interior using acrylic plaster rather than the traditional kind or stucco found in such homes was astute. 'The acrylic component prevents cracking, provides an attractive texture and,' says Ron, 'eliminates the need for control joints that usually accommodate plaster.' Indeed, the entire team Nancy assembled had the flair, knowledge and capacity to meet her exacting standards. 'They all took it to the next level in detail and finish, embracing the vision.'

As the reader may glean, Nancy had a crystal-clear plan but relied on the experience and knowledge of Kathryn, Ron, Stephen Block and Randie Rubaum of Inner Gardens (the landscape designers), and others to see it through. She drew the initial floor plan 'to accommodate our bedroom, bathroom, dressing-rooms and my studio', and she even measured out some dimensions in her previous house to incorporate here: 'I just knew those proportions were harmonious. I was very specific,' she says mischievously.



'This was her dream,' says Kathryn, 'and she was absolutely dedicated to every aspect of the house.' But some things needed altering. Nancy explains: 'My heart was set on a U-shaped Spanish hacienda on one level though it soon became apparent another floor would be necessary.' Also the first floor initially had no windows along the long corridor. Kathryn was insistent they be part of the design for added pools of light.

Much of the furniture had to be commissioned from local craftsmen. 'It was strangely impossible to find a clean-lined four-poster bed,' says Kathryn, 'so I had my own design made by my iron forger.' Likewise the hall lanterns, sofas and armchairs in the sitting room and side tables in breakfast room were made specially for the house. The morning room reveals quite how much Nancy has left her past behind. 'Can you believe I used to be obsessed with majolica!' she says. Now displayed on shelves either side of the fireplace are the simple forms of Italian ceramicist Bruno Gambone, along with a few bold African artefacts.

The three years the whole process took have given Nancy time to adjust to her more disciplined, restrained and calm surroundings. 'I feel I could be in sanctuary,' she says. 'Anywhere' ■
Kathryn Ireland. Ring 001 323 965 9888, or visit kathrynireland.com. Marmol Radziner. Ring 001 310 826 6222, or visit marmol-radziner.com. Inner Gardens. Ring 001 310 838 8378, or visit innergardens.com



Opposite, top: Kathryn designed the guest-room's wrought-iron four poster and the one in the master bedroom (this page). The photograph is by Ken Rosenthal. Bottom: a 19th-century miniature chair is slip-covered in Georgina Sandy salmon linen from Otis Textiles. An antique Italian chandelier from Blackman Cruz hangs over the free-standing bath, from which one can survey the ocean. This page: the bedside lamp is from Hollywood at Home, the LA shop set up by British designer Peter Dunham