



# CONTINENTAL CALIFORNIA

## EUROPEAN FLOURISH IN MONTE SERENO

INTERIOR DESIGN AND INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE BY  
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ILLYA HENDRIX AND Thomas Allardyce have mastered the illusion of intimacy on a grand scale. The designers are frequently assigned palatial residences in which they manage to meld the formality of eighteenth-century Europe with the available comforts of late-twentieth-century America. The secret, borrowed from designers of palaces in the past, lies in the interior architecture. Attention is paid to ceiling heights, lighting, paneling, moldings, floors, doors, windows, railings, fittings and so forth to enhance the impact of traditional formal furniture. "You can put furniture anywhere," explains Allardyce. "But the background and the architecture are what create the warmth."

The six-bedroom residence of Matthew and Kathy Feshbach in Monte Sereno, south of San Francisco, is a good example of the designers' approach. The clients bought plans for a Mediterranean-style house to be built on a five-acre lot. "It had plain, square box rooms," says Hendrix. "We redesigned the exterior and detailed everything on the interior to be French with a few Italian accents. Cornices, railings, even the front door—we drew *every* detail."

When the Feshbachs contacted Hendrix and Allardyce, "they had a definite idea of what they wanted," says Allardyce. "They're very social people, and they needed a house that would be formal yet welcoming despite the large dimensions."

The designers' talent for creating just such an atmosphere is evident in the living room, where the background is key. The beamed grid of the

"It's based on our exposure to European design," says Thomas Allardyce of the interiors he and partner Illya Hendrix created for Matthew and Kathy Feshbach near San Francisco. Brunshwig & Fils tapestry covers the Empire-style armchairs in the living room. Henry Calvin drapery fabric.

ceiling and the ornamental moldings help divide the space, and the walls are given depth with triple glazes in shades of ocher. Throughout the house the floors have been softened by a complicated process of applying and removing black paint, leaving the dark tint in the wood grain, then staining the surfaces a honey color. "This layering of colors gives an aged effect," says Allardyce. A pale linen carpet woven in France covers the living room floor.

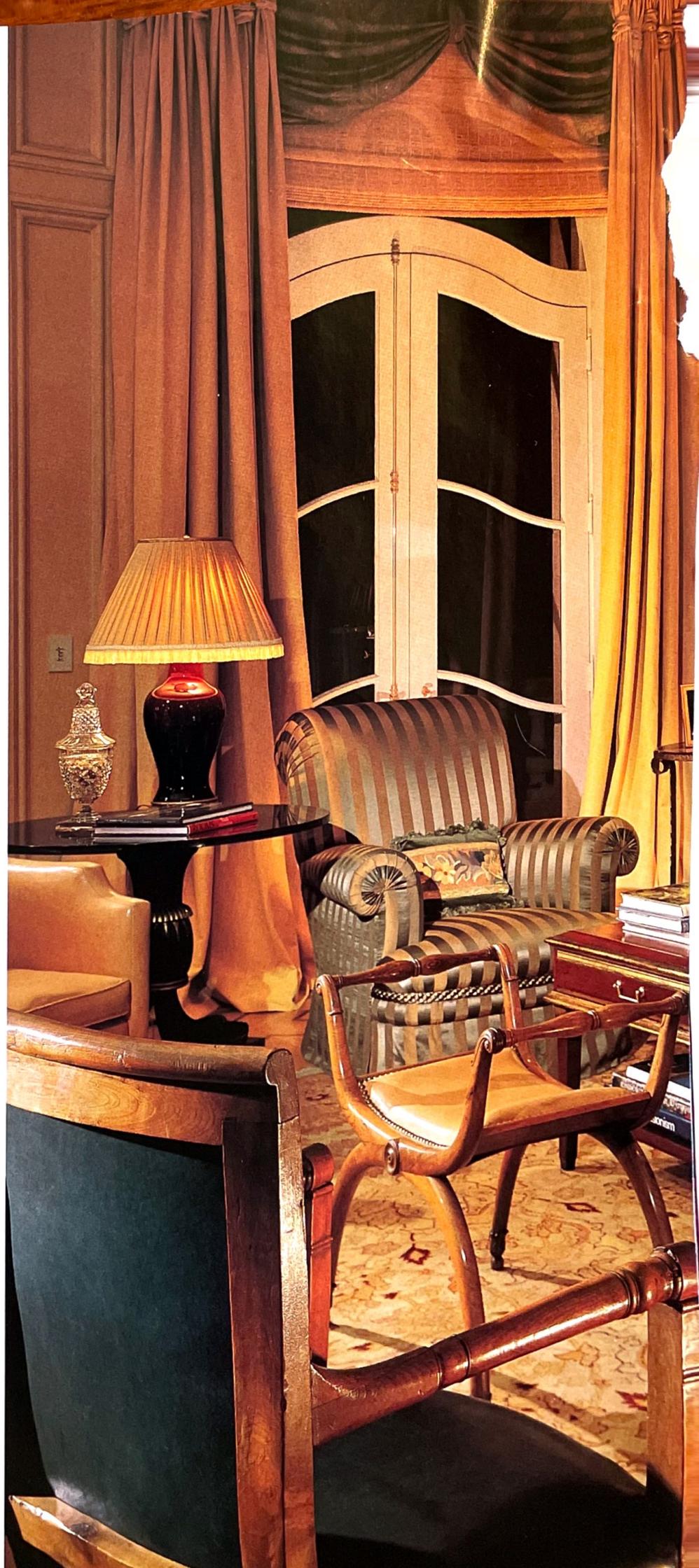
The room is composed of vignettes, gatherings of remarkable chairs in small seating and conversation areas. "We have a passion for chairs," Allardyce says. "They're floating pieces of sculpture that bring people together." A set of eighteenth-century George III painted armchairs are flanked by giltwood Empire-style armchairs of substantial size. "Scale creates intimacy," notes Allardyce.

An Empire-style *recamier* is next to an eighteenth-century English bamboo tea table with a red chinoiserie top. A nineteenth-century English pedestal table supports one of a pair of Han Dynasty vessels that have been French-mounted as lamps. On the mantel stands a sculpture of a horse, also Han Dynasty. "The intent was that the house have a formal feeling," explains Allardyce. "We structured that by selecting antiques with flair and fine primitive pieces. In the juxtaposition, a balance is achieved that is immediately inviting."

The library offers a variety of reading chairs and a sofa in the palette of khaki, crimson and flax that flows through other rooms in the house. A cranberry-lacquered Louis XVI-style table holds part of the clients' collection of antique books and prints. The rug is an antique Agra.

Entrance to the dining room, which features two ebonized and parcel-gilt tables, is through an arched doorway.

Arching French doors lend softness to the Neoclassicism the designers brought to the library, exemplified by the early-19th-century walnut X-stool. Brunschwig & Fils linen moiré was used for the draperies.







OPPOSITE: A circa 1800 Dutch still life hangs over the dining room's 19th-century mantel, which is framed by Italian painted parcel-gilt chests. Chair fabric, Scalamandré. Clarence House drapery fabric.

ABOVE: Allardyce designed the gridded ceiling for the master bedroom. The wallcovering and sofa fabric are from Scalamandré. Clarence House fabric for drapery sheers and trims. Stark carpet.

The family of four, including two children, ages nine and fourteen, uses the table next to the fireplace for nightly dinners. (The tables are brought together for larger dinner parties.) A pair of eighteenth-century Italian mirrors and parcel-gilt chests support Hendrix's assertion that "if you have a French room, the French say, you have to have an Italian piece to make it work." The nineteenth-century marble fireplace mantel, like the antique marble surrounds for all the fireplaces, was discovered in

France and imported by Hendrix and Allardyce. Lighting in the dining room and elsewhere is meant to simulate the candlelight of eighteenth-century France.

"The bedroom is feminine but also agreeable to a man," comments Allardyce. Lending authority to the room are the walnut four-poster draped with sheer white fabric, the Italian commode and the Directoire-style bench. A pair of eighteenth-century sang-de-boeuf vases have been transformed into lamps, and the floral

carpet and Italian painted occasional table provide whimsy. Once again, Hendrix and Allardyce have framed a suitable background with pale ocher damask on the walls, gridded ceilings and arched moldings around the doors and windows.

"The house is international," reflects Allardyce. "It could be in Paris or Rio. It represents a nostalgia for a refined way of life. Our clients have busy lives; they both work. This is a private retreat from the chaos we all deal with every day." □