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# Above Beverly Hills

*Classical Romance in a Canyon Pavilion*

INTERIOR DESIGN BY KALEF ALATON  
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"It's a grand feeling in a compact space," says Kalef Alaton of this residence set on a hilltop above Los Angeles. Overlooking a canyon thick with eucalyptus, the back patio was designed by Alaton as an "outdoor living room, without walls and with skylights." Wicker furniture is arranged to mirror the interior.



BAUDELAIRE NOTED that in a palace "there is no place for intimacy." Simon and Sherlee Beriro knew that intimacy was what they most desired in their Beverly Hills house. The couple, having seen Sherlee Beriro's children from a previous marriage move away, felt their house in the Holmby Hills neighborhood of Los Angeles was too large for the two of them. Yet they didn't want to lose the layers of memories and mementos that accumulate in a home over the years. They called on their old friend Kalef Alaton, who had designed the interior of their Los Angeles house as well as their residences in London, on the Costa del Sol and in New York City (and is currently designing another in Aspen).

Alaton understood that the Beriros wanted a sort of intimate palace that would accommodate seeming oppo-

sites—the formality of antique English furniture and Asian art, and the couple's easy outdoor lifestyle. In his succinct manner, Alaton describes the result as "very simple, very warm and, of course, very glamorous."

The Beriros consulted him when they chose the Benedict Canyon site, a narrow but dramatic lot overlooking an arroyo filled with eucalyptus trees, only a five-minute drive from downtown Beverly Hills. Ultimately, he was asked to design the house as well as the interior.

Alaton, who was an art student in Paris, has long considered architecture a hobby. It was his suggestion to align the master bedroom, library, and living and dining rooms along the length of the lot to take advantage of the view, and he worked closely with architect Said Falati in the execution. The structure is classical, not

BELOW: In the entrance hall, a wash of sun is reflected by the console table's gilt monopeds and a Rococo mirror frame. RIGHT: "It's the kind of house you feel comfortable reading and working in," says Simon Beriro. A Michael Ayrton bronze rises behind a cashmere-covered sofa in the library. Resting on an East Turkestan carpet, the Anglo-Indian table is from Mallett in London. Finish on columns is *faux-bois*.





cold; the rooms are spacious but not grand, with fourteen-foot ceilings and proportionately enlarged doors. Alaton designed the upholstered furniture about one-third bigger than usual to bring about an unexpectedly relaxed feeling on a monumental scale. "Said and I made the most of every square foot," he explains. "All the rooms are set one against the other, without corridors."

The south wall of each room is fitted with windows or glass doors leading to a covered patio with skylights that extends the length of the house. Adjacent is a sixty-foot swimming pool of such geometric simplicity it could double as a reflecting pool. On

the patio, the designer clustered the wicker and canvas furniture, lamps, tables and sculpture in shadow arrangements of the rooms inside the house. "I like to be inside, Simon likes to be outside—this way we can be together but have both," says Sherlee Beriro. The emphasis on ease of living is reinforced by the open plan within the house. Only the master bedroom and bath, and upstairs guest quarters, are closed off.

Georgian armchairs at the dining table and an eighteenth-century Japanese double screen were among the few antiques Alaton added. Charged with helping to preserve the family's memories, Alaton concentrated on

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Alaton designed overscale windows, doorways and upholstered furniture throughout the house to add to the impression of spaciousness. ABOVE: The length of the living room is emphasized by two mounted Japanese screens, circa 1750. The sisal carpet is from Stark. Against the far wall is a Queen Anne black-lacquer secretary. LEFT: Opening onto the patio, the living room's floor-to-ceiling glass doors are draped in plaid taffeta from Scalamandré; they flank a herringbone-bricked fireplace and Neo-classical giltwood mirror. Clarence House wool damask covers sofa and club chairs.



incorporating furniture and accessories from other Beriro residences: The chandeliers in the entrance hall, the Queen Anne secretary, the two Thomas Hope chairs irreverently covered in a *faux*-tiger print and the eighteenth-century Venetian blackamoors all have been with the family for years. Alaton saluted Simon Beriro's Spanish heritage by stacking his rare oversize volumes of *Don Quixote* on the entrance hall table and highlighting his collection of exotic hashish and opium pipes in the library and living room. In the bedroom, as theatrical as a set from *Scheherazade*, there are the eighteenth-century Chinese cinnabar

boxes Sherlee Beriro has collected over the years. "It doesn't matter what you have or suggest, Kalef uses it," she says. "You feel you are participating in his decisions."

The Beriros are avid readers, so Alaton provided ample bookcases in the bedroom as well as the library. Plump chairs and side tables are strategically arranged near fireplaces in three rooms—with book in hand, one could sit nearly anywhere in the house and enjoy a peaceful read. Allowing herself a sigh of contentment, Sherlee Beriro bestows on Alaton a great compliment: "In the daylight this house is so serene, I don't go to town for a week at a time." □





LEFT: The dining room's French grisaille, one set of family mementos in a house filled with keepsakes, align with a tall Regency-style mirror of Alaton's design. Peking lacquer boxes and a Sheraton sideboard enhance the room's gold tones. OPPOSITE: Carved and painted American Indian-figure torchères light the entrance to the living room. George III-style mahogany armchairs at the English dining table are covered in leopard velvet, a fanciful element favored by Simon Beriro.

BELOW: "Softness is the key word in the master bedroom," says Alaton. The 18th-century ancestral portrait, bordered in bamboo, was purchased by the Beriros in Shanghai. Eastern motifs continue in the Persian carpet and the lacquer low table decorated with chinoiserie dragons. Indian-style paisley print draperies and beige quilting are from Clarence House. Notes the designer, "The window looks out to a silhouette of green."

