

# *A transformation in* **BEVERLY HILLS**

DESIGNER CHRISTOPHER GAONA CREATES A HOME WITH A EUROPEAN SENSIBILITY

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Drawing inspiration from Venetian Palazzos and Tuscan country estates, a formerly plain and relatively new residence in Beverly Hills now stands transformed into an eclectic villa reminiscent of ones in Italy that seems as if it has been on the property forever. “We wanted to create a residence that had a more European sensibility with a certain formality, yet was truly comfortable and able to cater to the clients with two young children,” notes designer Christopher Gaona, who over the last fifteen years has covered the California landscape deftly designing everything from residential homes to retail projects to commercial properties.

Gaona began by making substantial architectural enhancements and edits throughout, adding and modifying moldings and ceiling details. “It was important that the residence read as if it had been evolved over periods of time,” says Gaona. Trompe l’oeil, hand-painted wallpaper panels, and antique mirrored inserts were all employed in that vein. To bring timelessness to the living room he installed a French Trumeau fireplace surround and in the dining room burl wood veneers.









## *Everything about Negar is colorful*

PAGE 94 Designer Christopher Gaona took advantage of the sizable living room by setting up various seating areas. The first (right) is comprised of two Biedermeier style chairs covered in a teal fabric—one of the client's favorite colors and an inspiration for the project, a Lee Jofa velvet covered sofa designed by Gaona, a pair of Michael Taylor Designs occasional tables and a Jean de Merry cocktail table. The other blends a set of slipper chairs with a curved ebony wood and Rogers & Goffigon fabric covered sofa—all by Gaona. A more modern Jean de Merry chandelier is juxtaposed with the classic dark wood ceiling paneling.



PAGE 95 The sheer volume of the foyer was rendered more intimate by using horizontal striped Venetian plaster, and trompe l'oeil crown detail by muralist Leonard Greco was added to recall authentic details of a European villa. A Randolph & Hein mother of pearl inlaid mirror is suspended above a stone console while a custom Gaona entry settee covered in Lelievre fabric and a Murano lamp provide the teal pop of color that the client favors in this project.

OPPOSITE A burl and mirror sideboard by Gaona perfectly complements the wood framed mirrored walls embedded with Gracie & Co. hand painted wallpaper panels—the combination of which gives the dining room a jewel box effect.

TOP Two Kravet covered lounge chairs by Gaona flank a Cowtan & Tout fabric covered ottoman and create a cozy fireside spot in the sitting room. A faceted West Elm side table plays off of the Dennis & Leen mirror suspended above the fireplace, which echoes the trompe l'oeil ceiling details.

CENTER The bed set in an alcove opposite an impressive fireplace at once creates an intimate, soft space. Two Louis XVI Bergeres chairs covered in Bergamo fabric are cleverly paired with a vintage 1970s polished steel drum table from Brueton.



BOTTOM Rough-hewn Tuscan travertine pavers, a light-toned island, crisp white walls and off-white cabinetry juxtaposed with the darker wood door and beams provide a clean, country feel.



“I wanted the house to have modern and traditional elements that incorporated some pieces that I already had,” says Negar Soufer, the wife of David Soufer, a commercial real estate developer, exotic sports car collector and state-of-the-art home technology enthusiast. For her part, Negar is first a wife and mother, and then a prolific philanthropist and consummate host, as well as a fashion maven. A balance of luxury and comfort imbued with a European sensibility was achieved by mixing new and existing furnishings from multiple periods, ranging from upscale to more affordable pieces such as a contemporary parchment and bronze cocktail table from atelier Jean De Merry, a 1930’s French Art Deco dry bar and a faceted mirror end-table from West Elm.

“Everything about Negar is colorful,” says Gaona, and when it came to the interiors she says, “I loved the color teal mixed with warm neutrals,” as is evidenced in the entry, living room and sitting room. A blend of warm colors, textures and patterns—using textiles from Colefax & Fowler, Lelievre, and Rogers & Goffigon—add to the lively and warm atmosphere that reflects the Soufer’s joie de vivre. In the living room a sofa upholstered in a polka dot silk/linen cut velvet makes a playful statement when paired with an Alice Temperley tapestry cushion in wool and silk from The Rug Company.

The ground floor is comprised of a living room, sitting room, library, dining room, kitchen and guest suite. “We entertain in large groups so the living room, sitting room and dining room are set up to accommodate that,” says Soufer, while the upstairs was created as a private sanctuary for the family. The master suite includes his and her baths, his and hers closets, and a private sitting room, and the children’s rooms cater to their younger taste.

Just as much as the interiors, careful planning and attention was given to the landscaping where a pool and water features are surrounded by a tailored garden layered with succulents, cypress trees and aged terracotta pots with plenty of furniture for relaxing and entertaining. “The views are very important,” notes Gaona. “Every room on the first floor connects to either the lanai or the side gardens.” The perfect balance between comfort and formality, sophistication and casual living has clearly been beautifully achieved in this European villa off Sunset Boulevard. ☐

*ABOVE The transition from the living room into the sitting room boasts a contemporary hexagonal black mirrored table designed by Gaona and a pair of occasional chairs covered in Cowtan & Tout fabric that offer a more classic touch. The artwork also exhibits contrasting styles—a red resin sculpture by Joe Davidson on the table and a landscape on the wall.*

*OPPOSITE TOP The limestone pool terrace and lush landscaping create an oasis fit to transport you to the Mediterranean.*

*OPPOSITE BOTTOM Textured plaster in a light peach tone and terracotta roof tiles recall villas on the Mediterranean. Asymmetrical styling and a tailored garden layered with succulents, cypress trees and aged terracotta pots complete the look.*

