

# HAPPY TOGETHER



IN THE LIVING ROOM, A DE SEDE SOFA CURVES AROUND A KARL SPRINGER COCKTAIL TABLE. GERRIT RIETVELD CHAIRS WEAR A DIMORE STUDIO PRINT. PENDANT LIGHTS BY MICHAEL ANASTASSIADES; FLOOR LAMP BY ENTLER; ARTWORKS BY PAUL ANTHONY SMITH (LEFT) AND BRAD EBERHARD. OPPOSITE CHET CALLAHAN LOOKS ON WHILE JACINTO HERNANDEZ DIVES INTO THE POOL. LAUN SOFA. FOR DETAILS SEE RESOURCES.



Architect *Chet Callahan* teams up with designer *Ghislaine Viñas* and landscape maven *Judy Kameon* to craft a joyful Los Angeles home for his young family

TEXT BY **MAYER RUS** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **TREVOR TONDRO** STYLED BY **AMY CHIN**

“I wanted a real sense of whimsy and playfulness, especially for the boys,” *Callahan* notes.



ABOVE HERNANDEZ AND CALLAHAN AND THEIR SONS HERNAN (LEFT) AND NOE IN FRONT OF AN ARTWORK BY BRETT MURRAY IN THE KITCHEN. BULTHAUP CABINETRY; CORIAN COUNTERTOPS; GAGGENAU APPLIANCES; VOLA SINK FITTINGS; HAWORTH COUNTER STOOLS. ON WALLS, BENJAMIN MOORE PAINT. OPPOSITE THE HOUSE WAS BUILT AT THE TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY.

DERRICK ADAMS



in

Vitruvius's oft-cited dictum on the three virtues of good architecture—commodity, firmness, and delight—the concept of delight comes in third. Perhaps that's because the first two principles might be considered essential prerequisites for the last, or perhaps it's just that delight doesn't

always get as much respect as it deserves. At the historic Los Angeles home of architect Chet Callahan, there is certainly no shortage of it. A palpable sense of joy emanates from the house's imaginative architectural restoration, its adventurous, decades-spanning interior appointments and art collection, and its glorious gardens.

Built sometime between 1895 and 1905—the historical records are vague—the house, known as the Cummings Estate, is touted as the oldest residence in the neighborhood of Los Feliz. “At the time, this part of Los Angeles was the wild, wild West. There was nothing but tree farms and this one imposing structure,” says Callahan, who shares the home with his husband, investor Jacinto Hernandez, and their two sons, Hernan and Noe. “The style is quasi-Craftsman, with elements borrowed from Spanish and other styles. It's not an authentic exploration of any one vocabulary,” he adds.

For better and worse, the original house and grounds had been largely untouched in the century-plus since Wilbur



DINING CHAIRS BY A. RUDIN, WEARING A DEDAR COTTON VELVET, SURROUND A BESPOKE TERRAZZO-TOPPED DINING TABLE. PENDANT LIGHT BY ERIC SCHMITT.

Cummings, an L.A. businessman and real estate developer, built the place. On the plus side, most of the architectural details and woodwork were intact, albeit damaged (a bonus for interior designer Ghislaine Viñas), and the property boasted an array of mature eucalyptus, pine, palm, mulberry, and olive trees (a jackpot for landscape designer Judy Kameon). On the minus side, the structure needed a proper foundation—it sat on an eroded stacked-stone base planted on a patch of dirt—as well as serious structural reinforcement, completely new mechanical systems, the replacement of inelegant '70s-era aluminum windows and chintzy wrought-iron railings, and the reinvention of the kitchen and baths.

“I felt there was a grandeur to this house that needed to be respected. I wanted to honor its history but not mimic it. Frankly, there were some poor choices made 120 years ago that did not need to be memorialized,” Callahan says of the push and pull between preservation and innovation.

**THE ARCHITECT'S MOST DRAMATIC** gesture was the grafting of a spruce modernist addition to the back of the house. Essentially a massive glass box set within a terrazzo-clad framework, the two-story addition accommodates an expansive, light-filled kitchen that opens onto a terrace, and a home gym and carport on the floor below. “It was important for me to make a clear distinction between the modern and the historic,” Callahan says of the deliberate style clash. That same imperative guided the design of the sweeping stairway between the second floor and the attic level, which was transformed into the architect’s office. “The new stair

is a monolithic, sculptural form, in contrast to the hand-carved woodwork of the stair across the landing,” he explains.

Callahan and Viñas, who is based in New York City and worked with the family on their previous home, changed the complexion and mood of the living room by stripping the dark wood paneling and sealing it with a clear finish. “The room has a '70s glam vibe. Chet and Jase knew they wanted a de Sede sofa, and we paired it with Rietveld chairs upholstered in a graphic Dimore fabric to put a contemporary spin on a classic,” Viñas says. “Each room in this house tells a story, and within those stories there are characters that play off each other. We had to keep asking ourselves how the individual rooms relate to the overarching story of the entire house,” she continues.

Extending the narrative approach to decor, Viñas designed the carpet in the living room as an abstraction of the monumental Alexander Calder stabile that sits in the plaza of L.A.’s Bank of America building, where Hernandez has long worked. Likewise, the rug in the entry foyer is subtly detailed with a line drawing of the house’s architectural profile. In the dining room that leads off the entry, Viñas and Callahan again stripped the somber wood paneling and applied a pale-pink stain that lends a gossamer quality to the space.

“I wanted a real sense of whimsy and playfulness, especially for the boys. There’s a whole system of circulation, with secret tunnels and play lofts, that Hernan and Noe inhabit,” Callahan notes. At the top of the semicircular library tower, for example, the children can crawl through an internal window onto a net suspended above a white-lacquered baby grand piano (which Viñas describes as “Chet and Jase’s Liberace moment”).

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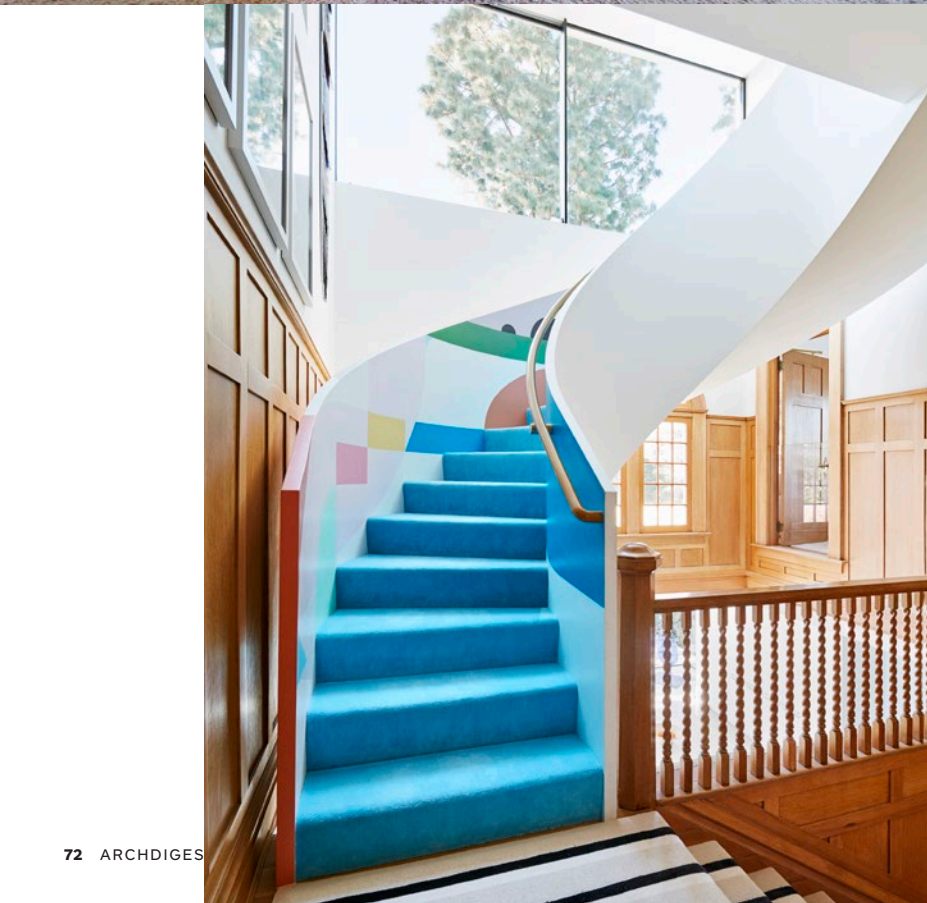
A PAINTING BY KEHINDE WILEY HANGS IN THE STAIRWELL. MARBLE CONSOLE BY JORIS POGGIOLI; MIRROR BY ZIETA; CUSTOM RUG AND STAIR RUNNER FABRICATED BY THE RUG COMPANY.



LEFT THE VIÑAS-DESIGNED BED WEARS A MAHARAM FABRIC AND FRETTE LINENS. VINTAGE MARCEL BREUER LAMPS STAND ON MERIDIANI BEDSIDE TABLES. PORTRAIT BY KEHINDE WILEY. BELOW STAIRS LEAD UP TO THE KITCHEN TERRACE. BOTTOM ARTIST ADRIAN KAY WONG PAINTED THE MURAL ON THE STAIRWAY THAT LEADS UP TO THE ATTIC.



VIÑAS DESIGNED THE BREAKFAST ROOM'S TABLE AND CONSOLE. PENDANT LIGHT BY MOOOI. CHAIRS BY MODERNICA. ARTWORKS BY DERRICK ADAMS.



“Each room in this house tells a story, and within those stories there are characters that play off each other,” designer *Ghislaine Viñas* says.

LEFT: KEHINDE WILEY.



ABOVE OLIVER, THE FAMILY'S CHIHUAHUA, NAPS ON A MONTAUK SOFA SECTIONAL IN THE FAMILY ROOM. PET LAMP CEILING FIXTURE; JAIME HAYON COCKTAIL TABLE; EERO AARNIO PONY CHAIR; ENY LEE PARKER LAMP ON SABINE MARCELIS SIDE TABLE; RUG FROM THE RUG COMPANY. BELOW CALLAHAN AND HERNAN IN THE ROTUNDA. PAINTINGS ON SHELVES BY RUDY SHEPHERD. BALDWIN BABY GRAND PIANO.



**THE BOYS' INFLUENCE** on the design of the home is also reflected in the homeowners' art collection, which focuses on the work of Black artists—including Kehinde Wiley, Mickalene Thomas, Derrick Adams, Woody De Othello, Paul Anthony Smith, Elliott Jerome Brown Jr., and others—as well as gay and Native American talents. “We wanted the boys to grow up seeing images of themselves on the walls. Most of the work is related to identity. It’s about different people and their unique experiences in the world,” Callahan says.

Of course, if the boys tire of looking at art or playing architectural Chutes and Ladders, they can always escape to the wonderland of gardens that surround the house. “We wanted the landscape to have a sense of discovery, so we planned it as a series of discrete experiences, each with its own color palette and surprises,” says Kameon, founding principal of L.A.’s Elysian Landscapes. The ceremonial entry procession, inspired by the blue garden at Lotusland, leads to a small plaza for parties directly in front of the house. From there, meandering pathways connect to the swimming pool, a competition volleyball court, a spa and firepit, an outdoor kitchen and dining area, and a basketball hoop by the carport.

“During lockdown, we’ve been using every corner of the house and property. I feel like Jase and I have many sides—playful, formal, active, comfortable, funny, serious—and this home responds to all of them,” Callahan insists. “In the end, I wanted to craft a piece of living architecture, a place attuned to the ways we gather and our desire for community. I suppose that’s the meaning of home.” ▲

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