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# DIGNITY RESTORED

A neighborhood stroll reveals a historical treasure

BY EVA DITLER • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARTIN MANN

Because Mission Hills homeowners Jen and Tom entertain a great deal, including numerous areas for conversation in their living room was a priority. "I also wanted a Parisian apartment look with some kind of funkiness to it," Jen says.



Above: This historically designated Monterey Revival-style home was built in the 1930s for C. Arnholt Smith. Facing page: Adding chair-rail paneling, silk grasscloth wallcovering, a crystal chandelier and an ornamental sconce to the entryway completed a vision for grandness that began with the original marble floor and art deco stairway.

If you listen carefully when the breeze picks up, you might hear the majestic oak on the front lawn of a Mission Hills historical house whispering the elegant residence's secrets. After all, the home's original owner was tycoon C. Arnholt Smith, self-made entrepreneur and first San Diego Padres owner, who was convicted of embezzling almost \$9 million from his companies.

"Built in the middle of the 1930s Depression, Smith and his wife, Lois, asked architect Ralph L. Frank to create a Monterey Revival-style, two-story home that would be tasteful, functional and unflashy, yet possess a restrained elegance to host Presidents Nixon and Reagan," Jason Larson says. His company, Lars Remodeling & Design, renovated the residence for Tom and Jen, who bought the property almost three years ago.

"We were living about a half-mile away, and Tom was out walking the dog," Jen says. "He saw the foreclosure auction sign and decided to take a look around the back."

"I was blown away by the spectacular ocean view spanning from Mexico to La Jolla," Tom says. "It was the most amazing property with so much potential."

The simple yet regal exterior of the four-bedroom structure fuses Spanish influences, such as an ironwork balcony and stucco cladding, with New England Colonial details that include louvered shutters and a paneled surround framing the entry door.

"When we bought the house, the exterior had a weird yellow, green and brown color scheme," Jen recalls. "Combined with the wrought iron, it reminded us of the haunted mansion at Disneyland."

Now a sophisticated dark gray provides a wonderful contrast to stark white trim around windows and the door surround. Repainted a high-gloss black, the front door contains a circular pattern around a central doorknob — a feature appropriate to Monterey style.

Open that door and a posh entry, gleaming with original marble flooring, greets you. Just beyond the entry, through two





impressive columns, the new kitchen/dining area beckons guests to gaze at the panoramic view through its floor-to-ceiling, sliding-glass doors. The doors lead out to an expansive deck.

“The original kitchen was compartmentalized and was located at the front of the house,” Jason says. “We moved the kitchen to the back of the home where the view is and redid the existing deck back there, extending it out 2 feet. We added columns to divide the entry from the kitchen/dining area. This also allowed us to drop the ceiling in the kitchen/dining room and provided us with the transition we needed from the marble floor in the entry to the new, wide-planked, reclaimed-wood floor.”

Although the kitchen has a more cosmopolitan feel than other rooms, its gray-and-white color scheme, along with honed marble on countertops and an iridescent marble backsplash, provide continuity with the rest of the house. Custom moldings and cabinetry echo the circular theme from the front door. Specialty pullouts, two warming drawers, two side-by-side refrigerators, two wine coolers, two dishwashers and a smaller prep kitchen behind the big kitchen make this an ideal space for entertaining.

“I’m always in the kitchen,” Jen says, “but my favorite room is the living room. Sometimes Tom catches me just looking at it and he says, ‘What are you doing? Staring at your masterpiece?’”

Jen’s “masterpiece” is just off the entry on the northwest side of the home. A magazine photo she saw of a room with an 1890s Parisian apartment style motivated its look. She told her designer, Toni Smith, “If I could move to Paris, this is the room I would want.”

“The room in the photo had paneling, so I used that for inspiration on the paneling in this room, although here it isn’t as ornate,” Toni says. “The lighting style is French Regency. There are two crystal chandeliers at each window and Anise sconces with gold-leaf details on the walls. Most of the furniture is custom. Two Bergère chairs are

A new kitchen at the back of the house captures an ocean view. A pocket behind the cabinet wall hides a 42-inch, LED television. A push-button, automatic-lift system brings the set out when needed.



Above: The settee's velvet fabric adds a pop of color in the master bedroom. Facing page, top: Even the guest bathroom includes a spectacular view toward the ocean. Facing page, bottom: "The stunning custom design and tilework in the master bathroom was the triathlon of my career," says Lars designer Jess Galvin.

upholstered in silk velvet. There are Savoia French armchairs, and the settee against the banked-out window has silk fabric on the seat and black damask cotton on the back."

To add privacy and discourage the homeowners' two Weimaraners from entering this glamorous space, Jason's team custom ordered glass French doors with the circle pattern. To anchor the room, they widened the baseboards.

The living room wasn't the only space that Jen wanted reinterpreted with French flair. The Parisian look also crept upstairs to the master bedroom. To fashion a fitting, grand entrance for the space, the Lars remodeling team beefed up the thickness of the wall and widened the door.

"When you walk into the bedroom, the first thing you notice is the big, bold pattern of the damask wallpaper on the wall by the bed," Toni says. "It showcases the charcoal velvet headboard and the beautiful pendant chandeliers. Jen didn't want typical

nightstand lamps. She wanted to keep that elegant French feel."

An adjacent bedroom was used to make a his-and-hers, walk-in closet. Right off the closet is access to the deck. On the other side of the room, an arched opening across from the king-size bed leads to the new master bathroom.

Jen told Jason she wanted something completely over the top and, says Jen, he did it.

"The cabinets and vanity dresser were custom made in a vintage style," Jason says. "We wanted something that felt like the old, vintage Hollywood time period that you would never see anywhere to buy."

Countertops and flooring are marble with an inset marble pattern on the floor to resemble an area rug. Linen closets were reconfigured into an oversized, walk-in shower that includes a steam unit. Premier placement by the bay window's stunning view went to a claw-foot tub.

"I always wanted a decorative claw-foot tub," Jen says. "We've been here three years and I still haven't been in it, but our 7-year-old daughter loves to take a nice long bath and watch TV."

Their daughter's favorite space may be the master bath (although she has a darling bedroom upstairs that's fit for a princess and her own purple-tinted bathroom). And Jen's best-loved space is the living room. But Tom's preference is the man cave on the bottom floor. The "lair" spans the entire width of the house and includes a sauna, projection screen, shuffleboard table, retro Pac-Man game, sunken bar and a glorious view from the same angle as the kitchen. A door leads to the pool and barbecue area.

"That's my domain," Tom says. "It's great for entertaining — and we love to entertain. The way the whole house is laid out now, we can throw all the parties we want in style. There's even a fireplace out by the pool." ♦

