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Director Adam
Shankman at
home in the
Hollywood Hills
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DESIGN AWARDS

BELVEDERE
MIDCENTURY
IN MARIN

NAPA
BEHIND THE
GARDEN WALLS



piedmont

EASTERN ORIENTATION

A FAMILY IN PIEDMONT FILLED THEIR NEWLY RENOVATED
DREAM HOUSE WITH MEMENTOS FROM THEIR TIME IN ASIA.

BY KATHRYN LOOSLI PRITCHETT PHOTOGRAPHY BY CÉSAR RUBIO

A bay window in the Irelands' living room frames a magnolia tree. The Balinese settee is upholstered in Asian textiles selected with the help of designer Martha Gregg.



"I've never liked things that are too matchy-matchy."

When they moved from Chicago to the Bay Area, Doug and Mary Ireland hoped to buy a rambling home in which to raise their four young children. They found a 1907 Edwardian in Piedmont, a leafy community in the East Bay hills, with a graceful design and plenty of square footage but not much in the way of outdoor space. "Though the Oakland hills are full of wonderful old houses, Doug was frustrated that we didn't find any with big, flat yards," says Mary. "I told him that if that's what he

wanted, then Winnetka [Illinois] was calling."

Actually, soon it was Tokyo that was calling. Doug's work required a move to Japan, so the Irelands sold their yard-challenged house and settled into a Western-style home in a small residential neighborhood in central Tokyo. Midway through their three-year stint abroad, an old friend from Piedmont called to say he was selling his 1909 Craftsman house with its expansive backyard. The Irelands seized the chance to own the historic home, which also included a large tennis court, a pool and a newly renovated Japanese teahouse.

Though the size and location of the house were ideal, there were some significant design challenges. The backyard was difficult to access, and the tennis court monopolized most of the lawn. Almost every window framed a dismal view of the industrial cyclone fence surrounding the tennis court or cars parked in front of the garage. Additionally, the front porch was rotting away, and small, awkwardly placed doorways blocked the flow from room to room.

LEFT: The teak island and zinc countertops are durable enough for family use. "I love the marks that show we really use this kitchen," says Mary. BELOW: The family room addition opens out to an expansive backyard.

"Before the renovation, the floor plan always seemed to bounce you out to the front of the house rather than to the backyard," says architect Bill Holland, who was brought in to give the house more light and better access to the outdoors. To that end, Holland created a significant addition





for the back of the house, including a new family room and long gallery that connects it to the existing den. The new spaces feature folding doors and wide windows that open onto a large lawn (the tennis court was removed in favor of a lush expanse of grass). Bordering the lawn is a graceful stone patio and a hillside perennial garden, which was conceived by the late Suzanne Porter and completed by local landscape designer Gillian Garro. The garage was converted into a recreation room, and a new three-car garage was dug out underneath the house. "With all the concrete work that went into the garage, we joked that work had to stop on the Bay Bridge in order to finish our project," says Mary.

Once the renovations were completed, it was time to unpack the treasures that the family had acquired while traveling throughout Asia. Mary comes from a long line of antique collectors and loves to shop for unusual folk art—"partly because there's the thrill of chasing a bargain," she says. While abroad, Mary shopped not only in the great markets of Tokyo but also during her travels to Shanghai, Ho Chi Minh City, Myanmar and Bali.

"Expats are inveterate shoppers," says Mary. "We knew that all too soon the experience would be just a memory, so we brought back everything we could that would recall our time abroad."

Because her interest in folk art has informed so much of her collection, the artwork, furnishings and textiles that Mary brought back blend harmoniously with the unique English and American country pieces she already owned. "I've never liked things that are too 'matchy-matchy,'" says Mary.

Refinished oak woodwork in the dining room creates a warm backdrop for the English antiques and Asian-inspired new furniture, such as the black dining chairs Mary found at Cost Plus.

The generous living room at the front of the house features a mix of pieces from the family's time in Asia. The fireplace surround is covered with Japanese *washi* paper.



An unlikely combination of materials carries the wabi-sabi sensibility to the newly renovated kitchen, where white-painted cabinets are offset by a large wooden tansu chest and pantry doors made from two of the many *ranma* (wood transom panels) that Mary found in Japan. A durable teak butcher block makes a family-friendly surface for the large central island, while the rest of the counters are covered in zinc that is quickly gaining a welcoming patina. Three large lanterns from Tokyo's Kappabashi kitchenware district hang above the island, and a light fixture made from another *ranma* hovers over the breakfast table.

Between the kitchen and dining room, a simple fireplace integrates the traditional style of the house with the Asian decor. "We thought about centering the fireplace in the dining area, but I'm in the kitchen all the time, so I wanted to be able to see it as I cooked," says Mary. "Also, I wanted the fireplace to function as a focal point at the end of the gallery."

In addition to opening up the house's entrance directly to the backyard, a newly expanded opening between the kitchen and oak-paneled dining room connects the more casual family rooms at the back of the house with the formal front rooms. In the dining room, a mix of elegant antiques, including an English dining table and sideboard, are combined with a simple chandelier found at Ikea and black chairs from Cost Plus.

"Along with all the vivid colors in the house, I like to use black because it underlines and connects everything," says Mary. "Before going to Tokyo, I wasn't really much of a 'blue person.' But I've come to love the way the Japanese combine blue and black."

LEFT: Architect Bill Holland opened up the entry hall—keeping the geometric glass transom—straight through to the backyard. BELOW: Doors from almost every room allow for easy access to the outside.

"I really take the rhythm of our family seriously—how we live, what happens inside and out," says Mary. "The house had so much potential to be connected to the outdoors; it's so wonderful now that when you walk in the front door, you're pulled through to the backyard." ■

