



HOME+DESIGN

DESIGN AWARDS

Chet Callahan

By Abigail Stone
Photos by Minb Tran

The modern addition, which encloses the home's open, welcoming kitchen, enjoys spectacular views of the Griffith Observatory and the Hollywood sign.



INEVITABLY, CHILDREN ARE a catalyst for change. For architect Chet Callahan and his partner, it was their two growing boys that compelled them to consider a move to a bigger space. But the place they settled on—the 120-year-old Cummings Estate—was far from ideal. While certainly large, “it was plagued by decades of deferred maintenance and poor renovation choices,” says Callahan.

He dove into the building's past, rifling through photos and newspaper clippings that showcased its former grandeur. Where some might be oppressed by the mantle of history, Callahan finds inspiration. “There's a richness to the craft and a beauty to the ornamentation,” he says. “I don't feel comfortable removing that just for the sake of clean lines.” Instead



The sculptural staircase bisects the house as it winds up toward the top of the home.



A classic, curvaceous de Sede sofa dominates the living room and lightens the impact of the interior's woodwork.



LEFT: A mural by Adrian Kay Wong that adorns the sculptural staircase leads to Callahan's attic office. RIGHT: "I placed it on the central axis of the home, which is also the kitchen and the center of our internal environment," says Callahan of the location of the extension.



"The goal was to make it feel natural," says Callahan of the transition between the original structure and the new. "It's so subtle it takes a moment to register."

of razing the structure and starting afresh or trying to mimic the past, Callahan has engineered a new approach to renovation that relies on juxtaposition to underline the symbiotic relationship of the present to the past. "When you set the old and the new side by side, they both become more interesting," he says. "There's the historical foundation, then the modern point of view is layered on and they complement each other."

While the initial impression might seem dissonant, a closer examination reveals an elegant dialogue. "It starts with an appreciation of what was there and what it was intended for, and then a pragmatic assessment of what is still useful," says Callahan. Certain elements, like the merging of indoors and out, have evolved over the last century;

others, like the sharp division between service spaces and public rooms, have been discarded; still others, like the need for an orchestra balcony in a time before streaming music, have vanished, replaced by new technologies. "I wanted the home to be a reflection of my family and how we live now, not a time capsule," says Callahan.

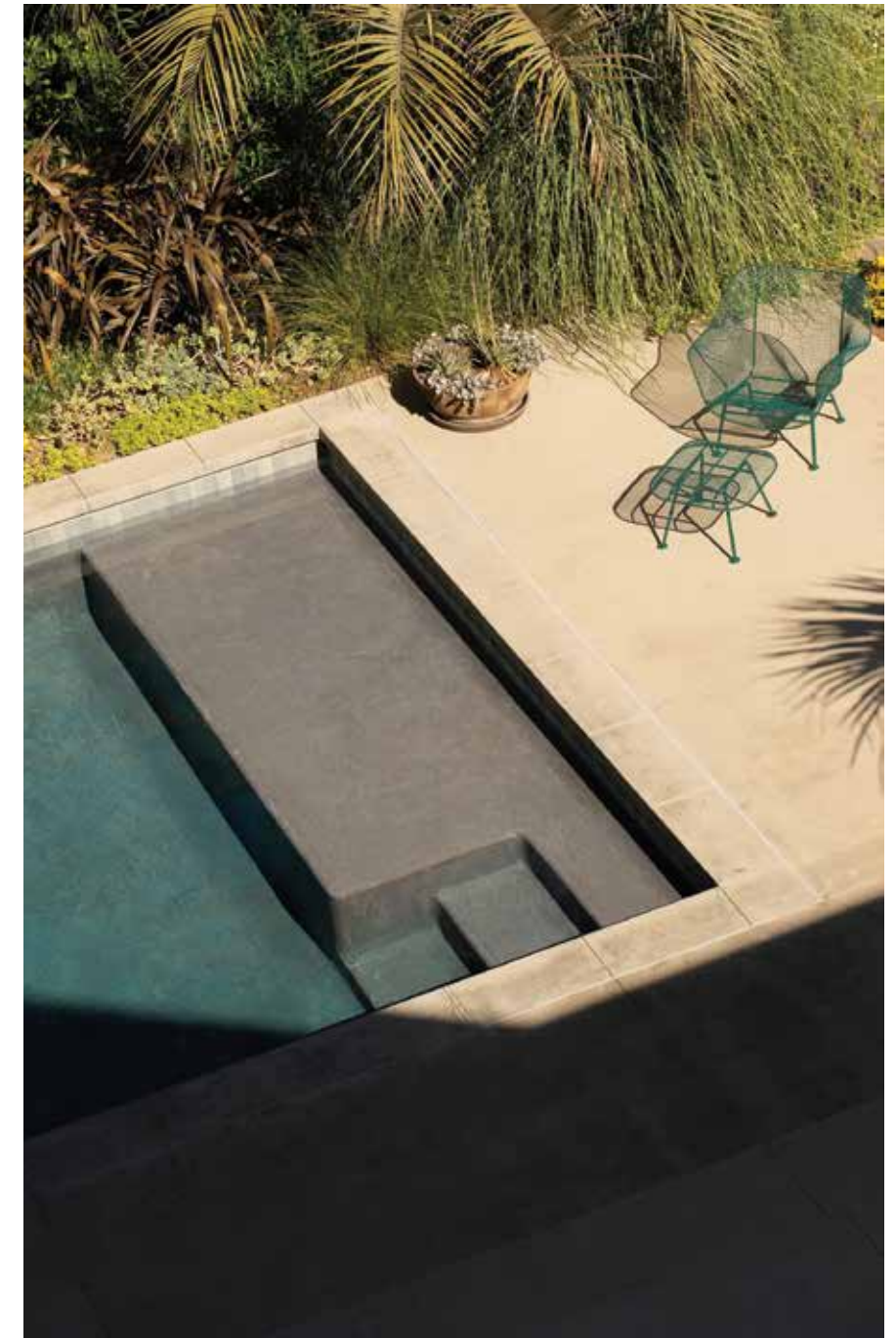
To that end, he added a contemporary extension at the center of the house that showcases a welcoming, generous, open kitchen, which embodies the current ideal and celebrates the home's sweeping views. "Our contemporary addition into the traditional architecture is an honoring of classical organizational strategies, timeless surfaces and pure geometric forms as much as it is a monumental intervention,"



The stately exterior of the home is in sharp contrast to the light-filled piano room and whimsical reading net that lies within this rotunda.



LEFT: A grouping of playful pieces — the Chester Moon Sofa by Baxter, a coffee table by A.A. Laun, a vintage Walter Lamb rocker and a Hans Wegner Circle chair — softens the visual weight of the large covered veranda. RIGHT: The sleek modern pool is set within a wild garden designed by Judy Kameon of Elysian Landscapes.



Callahan points out. The interiors, done in partnership with his frequent collaborator Ghislaine Viñas, underline his manifesto. “I had given her the prompt that I wanted it to feel as if the same person had lived in this house since it was originally built and had collected pieces from all over the world,” he says. She happily obliged in a whimsical mélange that includes Cassina chairs, an Ettore Sottsass lamp, Karl Springer tables and a de Sede sofa. “The intention is for it all to feel as if it’s not static,” he says. “That it will continue to change as we add pieces or swap things out.” Thus united, emboldened and continuously evolving, the past and the present step fearlessly forward into a vibrant future.