WESTERN UNION

Rustic meets refined at a Los Angeles ranch.

Price lamps, Schumacher curtains, wool rug and sofa from the Carlyle Collection by Ralph Lauren Home; Sofa, in Moby white linen, and bench, Windsor Smith Home Collection; 1900-style Italian wrought-iron chandelier, Antique mantel, Francois & Co.; Curtains of Wool Linen, Stark Rug, Jamie's Rug Collection.

INTERIOR DESIGN BY WINDSOR SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY BY MELANIE ACEVEDO
PRODUCED BY CAROLYN ENGLEFIELD WRITTEN BY FRANCES SCHULTZ

The most astonishing thing about this sprawling ranch in the rolling California hills is that it is smack in the middle of the city of Los Angeles and blocks from the beach. Its location is as extraordinary as it is unexpected, but then interior designer Windsor Smith does not pander to predictability. Embracing genteel elements of classic Italian and Spanish Colonial styles and the laid-back elegance of California comfort, the L.A.-based decorator deftly avoids cliché to create a fresh, modern take on stylish country living in the city.

Forsaking the shelter of a Beverly Hills gated community life, this active young family followed their passions to a smaller house and a larger lifestyle on three acres in Brentwood, at the end of a winding eucalyptus-lined driveway. The wife, a devoted dressage equestrian and mother of two like-minded daughters, is now but a short trot from her horses. The husband, a businessman and collector of antique and vintage cars, cares for his treasures in an underground multi-bay garage, constructed conveniently beneath the horse stables. Back above ground, a stone's

A bold painting by James Nares gives a traditional dining room a modern edge. Chandelier, Quintal Bronze; Russell Vera, Lima Fyrdi Antiques, sconces; Antique table, Venice Brickathon.

throw from the house, a small vineyard flourishes. "It's like Napa in Brentwood," says Smith.

Three years in the making, the newly refreshed residence underwent structural renovations in collaboration with architect Michael Burch that included raising ceilings, adding beams, and enlarging door openings between rooms. The addition of a lofthke kitchen and family room, with huge steel-cased windows, says Smith, "completely changed the energy of the house and formed a glorious connection to the outdoors," with a direct view of the paddock and stable.

All those windows and doors, however, can confront one with harsh light by day and gaping voids by night. Yet here, the sweeping landscape provides a softening effect. "The exterior is stunning at night because the property is so beautifully lit, with every window framing a gorgeous vista or a century-old pine tree," Smith says. And while curtains protect from daytime glare, they serve a visual purpose as well: "The roof pitch lines are not high, so I hung the drapery at the top of the wall to lift the eye. And rather than use a big, heavy treatment, I chose a small rod that's less ornate and more youthful." The curtains also add a necessary vertical element. Absent tall armoires or secretaries, a room can become horizontal, she says. "The drapery breaks through that line."

With her signature light touch in unfussy fabrics, a neutral palette, a mix of metals and woods, and a painted ease of antiques, Smith creates inviting rooms that look collected rather than store-bought, curated rather than settled for. "If I'm in a room where everything is new, I'm uncomfortable," she explains. "I want a story, things that have a vibration of history." Her client shared this seminal sensibility, and their collaboration was keen and constant.

Together they gathered reclaimed architectural elements from around the world, incorporating old repoussé finials into handrails, converting Spanish estancia gates into doors, and making tables from African safari trunks. "I love a well-traveled house," Smith says. And if family and designer are any indication, this house is still going places. ❑

Natural textures and a light palette make for an airy master bedroom with casual flair. Bed, Martyn Lawrence Bullard. Linens, Calvin Klein Home. Jansen bench in Caldeta leather. Roman shade of World Linen fabric with Rogers & Goffigon trim.

"Embracing classic styles and CALIFORNIA COMFORT, *the designer creates a fresh take on country living in the city."*

A variety of chairs plays with scale and adds a surprising element to the expansive kitchen. Chairs, in Caldeta leather, Windsor Smith Home Collection. Backsplash tile, Exquisite Surfaces. Sink fittings, Brasscraftmen, sconces: Sofa in Marvic Textiles linen, Windsor Smith Home Collection. Louis XIV-style settee, Batyas Antiques. Curtains of Brunschwig & Fils fabric. Walls in Mountain Peak White, Benjamin Moore Aura.

Chairs, Restoration Hardware. Hanging lanterns, Windsor Smith Home Collection; sconces, Photeon Lighting. Porcelain-and-gold-leaf vases, Yeager's Treasury Shop; bench, Moore Aura.

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