

# Hollywood Hip

Darryl Wilson's own house is clearly cool









For some in Los Angeles, life's a beach. For others, it's the Hollywood Hills. Darryl Wilson, a third-generation Angelino and practicing designer for 15 years, chose the latter. He purchased his 1950s house for more than its bones and potential. The setting, just minutes from the buzz of Sunset Boulevard, offered the promise of semipermanent vacation.

The property is accessible via a long private driveway immediately transporting visitors from the city to a secluded site with urban and canyon vistas. "I've done a lot of traveling, including stays in Japan, Bali, and Thailand, and this is very much along those lines: a sumptuous interior merged with a fantastic array of outdoor plants," Wilson says. Landscaping, restructuring, and decorating—the designer did it all.

Typical of the '50s, his 3,400-square-foot, two-story house had been cut up into small spaces: five bedrooms, two and a half bathrooms, a living room, a dining room, and a galley kitchen plus a breezeway that connected the garage to the backyard. Wilson completely altered the plan and fenestration. Now the house reads as modern, with a unified living-dining area, a colonnaded front entry, a kitchen relocated to the back—absorbing part of the breezeway—and private quarters reconfigured as three bedrooms, a den, and four baths.

Most striking, however, is the fresh transparency. The front facade is now a rhythmic play of apertures. There are full-height windows on the ground floor, and the gridded door was adapted from one at a Gregory Ain house in Los Feliz where Wilson formerly lived. The new lengthwise entry axis terminates in a mitered glass

wall, which continues into the adjacent living area to provide views of a koi pond. Upstairs, the designer created a similar mitered glass corner for the master suite. Addressing ensuing structural issues, he installed wide-flange steel beams as support. To counterbalance the visual lightness of the glass, he laid walnut flooring upstairs and down and built cabinetry in the same wood for the kitchen and bathrooms.

"When I'm doing a house, I fall in love with a piece of furniture and a fabric and

*Previous spread, left: At his own Hollywood house, designer Darryl Wilson balances a taste for mixed media, in the form of Arch Connelly's composition of pearls and semiprecious stones, with the relative sobriety of a Christian Liaigre bench.*

*Previous spread, right: Wilson stained this Paul McCobb desk, nickel-plated the frame, and completed the vignette with an Antonio Citterio chair, 1950s lamp, and flea-market vase.*

*Opposite, top left: Fenestration was increased by a factor of 50 percent.*

*Opposite, top right: Appointments in the 400-square-foot master bedroom include Paul McCobb tables topped by lamps made from 1940s French vases. An Indonesian tapestry hangs above.*

*Opposite, bottom: In the dining area, replicas of Harvey Prober chairs surround a vintage Florence Knoll table with 1950s candelabras by Tommi Parzinger. In the living area, Wilson faced the existing fireplace with concrete.*

*Right: The gridded front door is an adaptation of a Gregory Ain design.*

PHOTOGRAPHY: toshi yoshimi





design around them,” he says. In this case, the love objects were by Paul McCobb, purchased at L.A. Modern Auctions (now → associated with Butterfields). Wilson rejuvenated his finds—a coffee table, an exquisite writing desk, and bedside and occasional tables—staining the pale wood dark and nickel-plating the brass hardware. At two subsequent auctions, he scored with a pair of chairs and a rosewood dining table by Florence Knoll.

These items set the stage, and Wilson embellished the scenery with additional pieces from the era. There’s a Milo Baughman chaise longue and a Dunbar table where the entry meets the living area. The

dining chairs are line-for-line copies of a single Harvey Probbler original that Wilson purchased. “I loved the fact it looks like a folding chair,” he says. “Of course it isn’t. It’s actually steam-bent mahogany and incredibly hard to make.”

For upholstered furniture, he moved forward a few decades to contemporary B&B Italia. “I rarely buy vintage pieces. Generally, they’re really not comfortable, and they require too much work to make them so,” he continues.

With accessories, he allowed himself some flamboyant touches. Tommi Parzinger’s pair of silver-plated candelabras could make even the most blasé collector green with envy. Chinese floor lamps from the 1800s, newly wired for electricity, inject exoticism.

Wilson’s preferences in art tend toward bold graphics and, as a counterpoint to their impersonal nature, intimate black-and-white photographic portraits, and he likes mixed media, as the work at the entry suggests. Arch Connelly’s *Fireflies* is a stunning composition of pearls and semiprecious stones embedded in oil paint. Again, auction proved a fortuitous resource. Wilson obtained this piece and several other ones when the Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO) put its modern-art collection on the block last year.

As with any southern California residence, though, exterior is as important as interior. Wilson’s property is a serious piece of landscape architecture, and water elements, hardscape, and planting can be seen from almost any point in the house. There’s a light side to it as well: inexpensive furniture finds, updated with a splashy coat of orange paint. Says Wilson: “It’s nothing special, just groovy.” —*Edie*

*Cohen*



*Left: The master suite’s two bathrooms are dominated by walnut cabinetry and statuary marble in a honed finish.*

*Opposite: Eames chairs enliven the hardscape and pool coping, both of exposed aggregate.*

DESK CHAIR, SECTIONAL (LIVING AREA), BED: **B&B ITALIA THROUGH DIVA**. SEATING (FRONT PATIO): **EMMERSON TROOP**. BED LINENS: **CALVIN KLEIN HOME**. LAMPS: **ATELIER**; **CARL’S CUSTOM LAMPS & SHADES** (SHADES). CANDELABRAS: **DRAGONETTE DECORATIVE ARTS**. FITTINGS (BATHROOM): **DORNBRACHT**. SCONCES: **LEUCOS THROUGH LAMPA MOBLER**. CHAIRS (POOL): **MODERNICA**.

