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# THANDIE NEWTON

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Situated at Grand Avenue and Olympic Boulevard, both of Robertson's high-rise projects will feature L.A.'s first true skyline penthouses, boasting views of the mountains, ocean and the entire Los Angeles basin.

## Classical Artist

A passionate proponent of neoclassical architecture, Richardson Robertson is poised to change the L.A. landscape

**I**f Richardson Robertson III has his way, modernism won't be the look of 21st century Los Angeles. Known for designing majestic mansions in Beverly Hills and other cities, Robertson has an audacious plan to put his retro stamp on downtown. If all goes according to schedule, he'll break ground early next year on a pair of 60-story, 850-foot-tall luxury residential high-rises (just four blocks from the Staples Center)—quite possibly the tallest classical buildings in the world. Paeans inspired by the beaux arts style, but with Southern California styling (golden hued limestone, red tile roofs), the towers would stand in grandly genteel contrast to such downtown modernist

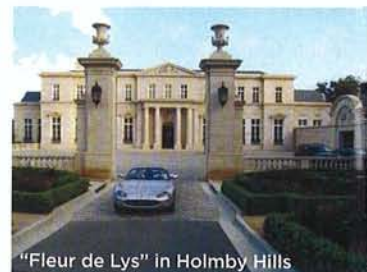
landmarks as Frank Gehry's silver-skinned Walt Disney Concert Hall and Thom Mayne's monolithic Caltrans headquarters.

As bold in his pronouncements as in his designs, Robertson believes historical revivalism—not modernism—will define the future of this sun-drenched metropolis. “Los Angeles is on the threshold of becoming a true world city,” says Robertson. Such a move forward—according to his reading of history—will go hand-in-hand with an embrace of neoclassical architecture. “Paris changed from a gothic city to a classical city in one generation, just the way New York changed when it became a world city,” he says. “I

think that is happening here now, and I want to be a part of it.” Robertson hasn't endeared himself to the city's reigning modernist establishment. When the Pacific Design Center bestowed him with its Los Angeles Star of Design Award in 2003, “I was booed and hissed at by the modernists,” he says, but not without a hint of pleasure. He clearly enjoys tweaking sacred cows. “I think we're in the baroque period of modern architecture.

It's all stylism,” he adds, “Most people don't really like to live in modern architecture.” Robertson's clients prefer something more traditional...and outsized. Case in point: the 45,000-square-foot Holmby Hills residence he designed three years ago dubbed “Fleur de Lys.” The chateau-like home is not only one of the most talked about mansions built in recent years, but it also won Robertson recognition from the French government for his contributions to French-style architecture.

Long before he was building real houses, Robertson created cities in a sand pile during a Dallas childhood. As he matured, he recalls thinking that California shimmered from afar as an “otherworldly” place. And while he has been a part-time Angeleno for 20 years—he hasn't let go of his initial enchantment. Currently, he's building a residence for himself in Malibu, a Spanish neo-colonial revival home he plans to drape in magenta bougainvillea. “It'll look like it has always been there,” he says, adding, “I want the pure timeless vision of L.A.—I want the myth.” **DEGEN PENER**



“Fleur de Lys” in Holmby Hills