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A rotating assortment of hydrangeas, topiaries and flowering herbs mingle around the entrance to Dana and Edward Slatkin's Holmby Hills house. OPPOSITE: Dana pauses on the swing in the front yard.



# ESTATE OF GRACE

A rambling family house in Holmby Hills perfectly merges design sophistication with livable ease

BY NATHAN COOPER PHOTOGRAPHED BY LISA ROMEREIN





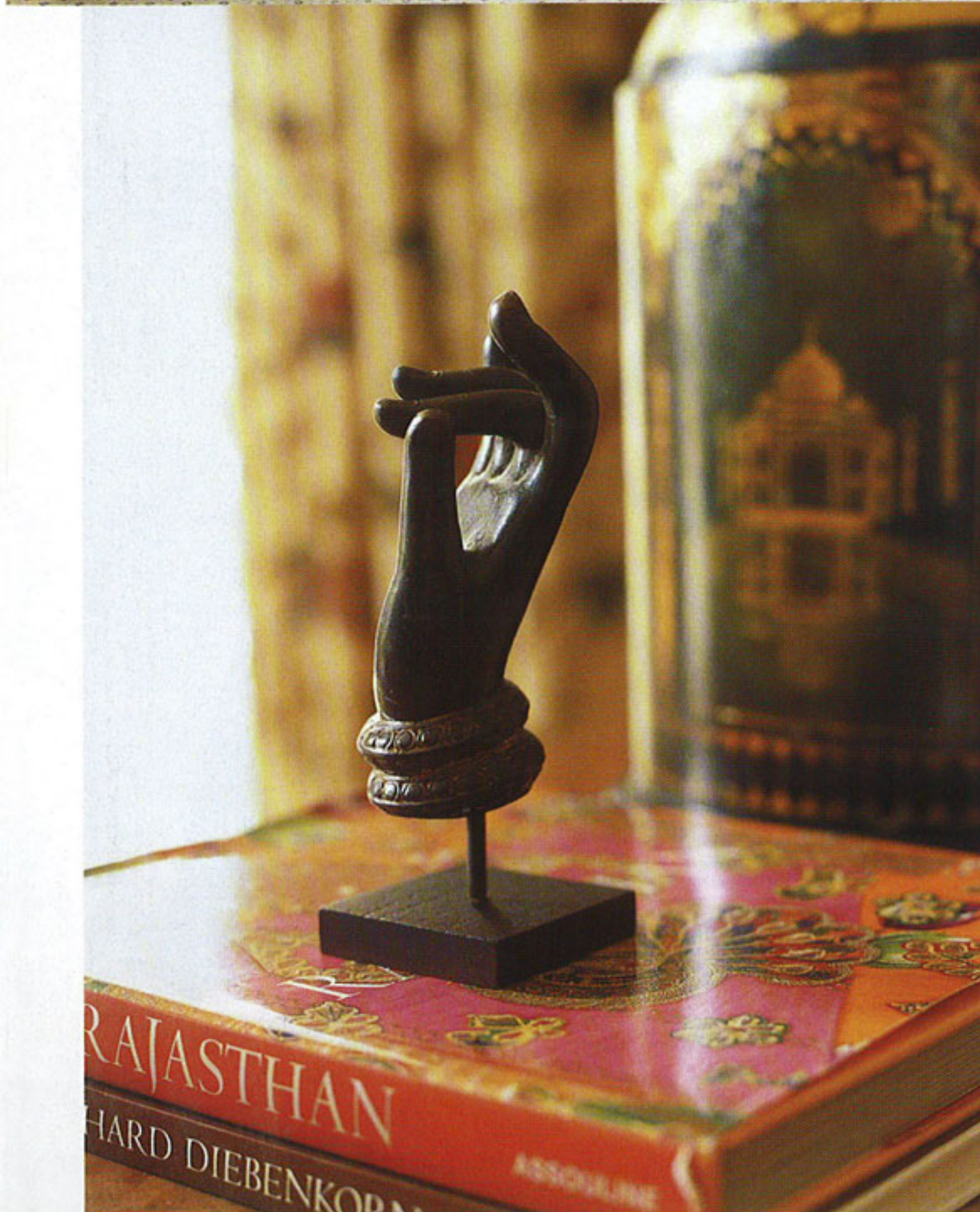
FROM TOP A Thomas Beeton-designed daybed in the family room; A Gilbert Poillerat chair in the foyer; An Asian accent in the family room.



Perched on top of one of the many gentle slopes in the Holmby Hills area of Los Angeles is a house that elicits a certain kind of wonderment. Creating a home seems to require choosing between sophisticated design and livability, yet here is the rare residence that seamlessly fuses the two. The harmony of ease and elegance throughout the property begins at the foot of its gravel-lined driveway, which sweeps in a grand arc up to the house from the street, announcing lofty aesthetic intentions, while also curving past a simple swing tied in a tree, offering a nod to the household's relaxed and engaging spirit.

Home to Dana Slatkin, a professionally trained chef and author of the forthcoming recipe and lifestyle book, *The Summertime Anytime Cookbook*, her husband Edward and their three children, the French Normandy house was built in 1926 and, as deduced by Slatkin from archival aerial photos dug up at UCLA, was among the first structures built in the area.

With Bel-Air to the west and Beverly Hills to the east,



In the living room, a Gerhard Richter painting hovers above the Slatkins' grand piano. "Playing classical music preserves my sanity," says Dana.





Original mahogany woodwork was custom bleached and paint-stained in the stairwell. OPPOSITE A 19th century Venetian mirror from J.F. Chen sets an ornate tone in the dining room.



A 1970s Milo Baughman lounge adds a space-age touch to the Slatkins' older son's bedroom. "He really wanted to paint the walls black," says Dana.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT A '20s English side table stands in the hall; The Slatkins' daughter's bedroom centers on a Swedish bed from Lief antiques; A family heirloom armchair.



Holmby Hills anchors the so-called golden triangle of Los Angeles real estate; yet, while no less affluent, it is far more unassuming than its neighboring enclaves. When English-born dry goods magnate and aspiring developer Arthur Letts purchased 400 acres above what would become UCLA for a mere \$40,000 in the early 1920s, he named the development after his birthplace with the vaguely aristocratic moniker Holmby Hills. His son-in-law, Harold Janss, eventually completed the project, dotting the corners with charming English-style street lamps. While high-profile residents from Walt Disney to Lauren Bacall have lived in Holmby Hills over the years, it remains calm and unpretentious. It also perfectly sets the stage for the Slatkin residence's deft mixture of grandeur and low-key fun.

Having studied rhetoric and music at UC Berkeley before completing a two-year program at The Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, Dana Slatkin is an avid host and makes full use of her house's multiple entertaining areas, from the twinkling glass conservatory to the sumptuous formal dining room bedecked with Chinoiserie







The ladies' lounge at I. Magnin was Dana's inspiration for her onyx-lined bathroom. The '30s crystal basket chandelier is from Gore Dean antiques.



Thomas Beeton custom designed the bed and chairs in the Slatkins' master bedroom.





## THE MINUTE WE DROVE UP THE DRIVEWAY, I KNEW WE WERE HOME. THE HOUSE OOOZED CHARACTER.

panels salvaged from one of Jacqueline Kennedy's residences. She also often employs the skills she honed working with Michelin three-star chefs Georges Blanc and Michel Guérard, as well as macaron artiste nonpareil Pierre Hermé, by turning her spacious kitchen—which radiates the warmth of a Provencal farmhouse—into a venue for her regular cooking classes for kids and adults alike.

A passion for food informed Slatkin's approach to designing her family's house from the first moment she and her husband saw the property. "When I was a culinary student, I had a fantasy of running a little inn somewhere in the South of France," says the chef. "I actually found an ad in a newspaper for a small chateau and became obsessed with buying it. I was 21. This house reminded me of my dream B&B," she adds.

The couple had been house-hunting for five years and, on the verge of giving up, saw something that didn't meet two of their key criteria (Spanish-style, city view). "Our broker was smart to read through the lines and showed us what we really wanted—a house with romance and soul," the L.A. native recalls. "The minute we drove up the driveway, I knew we were home. We loved the cozy rooms, peeling walls and overgrown garden. The house oozed character."

With the keys in hand, Slatkin was faced for the first time with decorating a home from floor to ceiling. "I have lived in a decrepit attic in Paris, a cramped Victorian apartment in San Francisco, a pretty fancy dorm room at UC Berkeley and in my husband's bachelor pad in the Hollywood Hills," she says. "I never had the chance to decorate a home until we bought this one." Rather than adopt a single rigorous design scheme, she followed her instincts. "I like all good design. The more you travel, the more types of beauty you learn to appreciate," she says.

Memorable restaurants—from Da Paolino in Capri and Tra Vigne in Napa to The Little Door and Chateau Marmont in West Hollywood—are among the primary sources of aes-

thetic inspiration for Slatkin. And like any high-caliber restaurant kitchen, a full roster of specialists contributed to the home's collaborative design process. The first order of business was to expand the house from its original two-bedroom footprint to make room for a family without disrupting the structure's unique charm and character. That architectural task fell to L.A.'s Richardson Robertson III, a specialist in classical design, whose *pièce de résistance* is Fleur de Lys, Suzanne Saperstein's sprawling Holmby Hills chateau. In the seamless addition, the Slatkins gained a spacious family room and two bedrooms, including the couple's airy master suite.

To help strike the perfect balance of furniture and decor throughout the expanded house, Slatkin turned to lauded designer Thomas Beeton, whose work the couple had previously admired in a magazine. "When we met Tom, we immediately hit it off," she says. "Working with him was like



Dana Slatkin clipping blooms in her cutting garden. OPPOSITE In the pool house, Missoni fabric covers a '40s French armchair from Downtown in Los Angeles.





FROM TOP The Slatkins' youngest stands guard outside; An original fountain; The patio's serene seating area. OPPOSITE A 19th century English table rests under a vintage chandelier from Malmaison in the conservatory.



cooking a banquet from scratch—it required cooperation, attention to detail, flexibility and many shopping trips.” To gain familiarity with his clients’ sensibility and way of life, Beeton traveled with them and traded ideas over multiple meals. “Tom helped us divide the spaces with intimate seating arrangements so that the rooms still felt cozy,” says Slatkin. He also devised richly pleasing color schemes such as the living room’s deep chocolate and whisper-pale char-treuse, or the intense spectrum of saturated pinks in the dining room. Single pieces of furniture speak volumes about the spirit of the house, such as the French deco iron chairs placed in the entryway. “They’re the only furniture in the room,” Slatkin points out. “They say, ‘We don’t take ourselves too seriously here,’ and, ‘We reserve this space as a thoroughfare for scooters and wagons and kids jumping off the stairs.’”

A few more creative voices joined the conversation three years ago when the Slatkins began considering the construction of a pool house. Initially, Dana felt the addition would be unacceptably over-the-top, while Edward wanted to create a space for the kids to gather. CONTINUED ON PAGE 111





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substantial house that feels perfectly in tune with the main residence. For the interior, Slatkin collaborated with L.A. designer Danielle Eber, who had originally assisted Beeton on the house. The two-story structure's girth, which contains two bathrooms, a changing area, a

small kitchen and a living room, is neatly hidden by its placement on a sloping hillside. "We ended up basically building a second home," she notes, "but one that fortunately will never involve braving the L.A. traffic to get to."

Like the rest of the Slatkins' home, the pool house hums with the coziness created by a mix of styles of textures that are all rooted in the same elegant point of

view. Earthy trunks of petrified trees rest next to sleek armchairs covered in nubby, pleasing-to-touch fabrics. The sum effect of the house's varied notes is equally inviting as it is inspiring. "For me, sticking with one style or genre would be like cooking with only one type of oil," says Slatkin. "I guess I design like I cook—with a little of this and a little of that, always starting with quality ingredients." ●

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