

# SWEET SPOT

Life is good for designers *Nate Berkus* and *Jeremiah Brent* as they move into a spectacular Los Angeles home for their growing family



IN THE ATRIUM, A 19TH-CENTURY SWEDISH BENCH WITH KRAVET-VELVET UPHOLSTERY SITS ATOP ANTIQUE SPANISH TILES FROM PARIS CERAMICS. 19TH-CENTURY ENGLISH GLASS PENDANT; 1950S LOW TABLE FROM A PARIS FLEA MARKET; VINTAGE CLUB CHAIR IN A CAROLINA IRVING TEXTILES STRIPE. FOR DETAILS SEE RESOURCES.



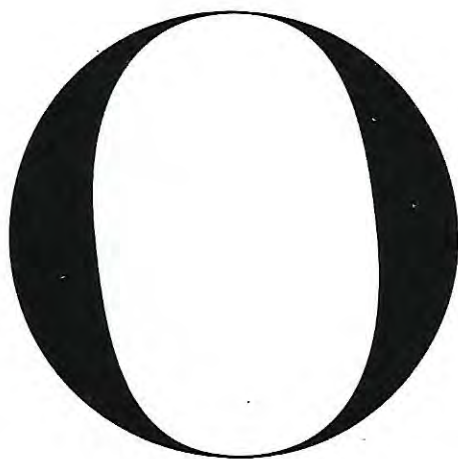
POPPY, IN A BONPOINT DRESS, PUSHES A WHEELED BASKET BY FIRE AND CREME KIDS WITH HARVEY (IN BASKET) AND SWIGGEN, TWO REX CROSS RABBITS. POOL DECK CLAD IN GRANADA TILE.

A FRONTGATE UMBRELLA  
SHADES A 19TH-CENTURY  
ITALIAN MARBLE TABLE  
SURROUNDED WITH IRONY  
BY STEFANIA BAGLATZI  
CHAIRS; CUSHIONS  
OF SUNBRÉLLA FABRIC.





BRENT AND POPPY (WEARING A D. PORTHAULT DRESS) AT THE KITCHEN ISLAND; CIRCA-1960 FRENCH BARSTOOLS; SINK FITTINGS BY WATERSTONE; 19TH-CENTURY FRENCH LANTERNS, BACKSPLASH AND SURROUNDING COUNTERTOPS BY OLLIN STONE; WHITECHAPEL BRASS KNOBS.



On first inspection, Nate Berkus and Jeremiah Brent felt that the house, clocking in at nearly 9,000 square feet, was much too grand for them and their toddler daughter, Poppy. “Our immediate reaction was, Who lives like this?” Berkus says, recalling his and his husband’s initial visit to the 1928 Spanish Colonial in Los Angeles’s Hancock Park neighborhood.

“Certainly not us.” But as they made their way through the various salons and gardens, the designers soon began to heed the property’s siren call.

First, there was the majestic 200-year-old oak tree rising in the backyard, like something out of a fairy tale. “We pictured Poppy, and eventually the rest of our family, playing under that tree, and we thought this was a place we could put down roots,” Brent says. Then there was the realization—perhaps

*rationalization* is a better word—that while the house is indeed large, its rooms, true to period style, are relatively intimate, particularly in comparison with the bloated volumes of contemporary McMansions and McModerns.

But the clincher for Berkus and Brent was an encounter with the then-home owner and her eldest daughter, who were sharing a bottle of wine in the kitchen. “Jeremiah and I had the exact same thought—that we’d like to raise kids who want to hang out with us when they grow up. There was a lot of love there, and you could feel that energy,” Berkus says.

For cynics, that scenario might read like a commercial for General Foods International Coffees. But the vision of domestic bliss and beauty that unfolds within the home defies even the most jaded misanthrope. Past the front door there’s the gorgeous grand stairway with its original wrought-iron balustrade, straight out of a movie from Hollywood’s Golden Age. Then room after room bathed in glorious sunlight, gurgling fountains, and that heavenly oak tree, literally topping



everything off. And, of course, there's Poppy, the mistress of the manor. Not even Central Casting could produce a more scrumptious sprite.

"We were lucky that the house was in great condition. It had been looked after. All we really needed to do was give it a cosmetic makeover—the perfect assignment for two decorators," Berkus says. That facelift entailed installing floors of antique marble to demarcate points of entry and transition; stripping, bleaching, and waxing the existing mahogany paneling in the dining room; replacing fireplace mantels and hardware with antique models; reworking the kitchen with new fixtures and surfaces; and furnishing the many rooms of the home in signature Berkus-Brent style.

"We go for a very clean, masculine look. We don't like to live with a lot of color," Brent says. "Or any!" Berkus swiftly chimes in. As for what constitutes clean and masculine in this context, the designers layered the house with rustic French, Swedish, and American furnishings of wood and stone, juxtaposed with more tailored Continental





**ABOVE** THE PLAYROOM'S "MEMORY" BOARD AND TABLE, BY RH BABY & CHILD; SOFA AND RUG BY RH TEEN. FLOOR PILLOWS AND HIPPO BASKET FROM ANTHROPOLOGIE. **RIGHT** THE PERGOLA IS PAINTED IN BENJAMIN MOORE'S ALABASTER. RH PENDANT LIGHTS; VINTAGE KREISS CHAIRS; POTTERY BARN PILLOWS. POPPY WEARS A MARYSIA BUMBY SWIMSUIT.

**OPPOSITE** IN POPPY'S ROOM, A WALLPAPER BY APPARATUS AND ZAK + FOX HOSTS ART BY HUNT SLOAN, MICHAEL HAINEY, FERNANDO BENGOCHEA, AND MARY LITTLE. A JULIA CONDON MOBILE HANGS OVER AN ARMCHAIR BY CISCO HOME WEARING A MEXICAN OTOMI TEXTILE; CRIB, TABLE, AND CHAIR BY RH BABY & CHILD; NATE BERKUS STOOL FOR TARGET; CAITLIN WILSON RUG.

