

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.



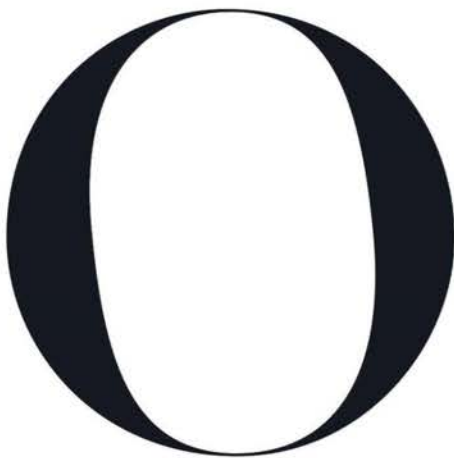
POPPY, IN A BONPOINT DRESS, PUSHES A WHEELED BASKET BY FIRE AND CREME KIDS WITH HARVEY (IN BASKET) AND SWIGGEN, TWO REX CROSS RABBITS. POOL DECK CLAD IN GRANADA TILE.

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





LEFT IN THE LIVING ROOM, A SOFA BY AFRA AND TOBIA SCARPA FOR CASSINA, A CIRCA-1950 ITALIAN CHAIR, AND A PAIR OF 1940S LINEN CLUB CHAIRS SURROUND A MARBLE COCKTAIL TABLE FROM HOLLYWOOD AT HOME. A 1950S ITALIAN SCONCE HANGS ABOVE A 1960S ENGLISH BENCH COVERED IN A LEE JOFA FABRIC; BELGIAN LINEN CURTAINS BY RH.

“When you live with a small child, you don’t want to feel beholden to your possessions.”
 —Nate Berkus



RIGHT BERKUS AND POPPY BESIDE A 19TH-CENTURY ITALIAN BOOKCASE IN THE GALLERY. 18TH-CENTURY SWEDISH TABLE; 1950S AMERICAN BENCH. LEFT IN THE DINING ROOM, 1950S JACQUES ADNET CHAIRS JOIN A 19TH-CENTURY ENGLISH TABLE. A PAINTING BY MATT CONNORS HANGS ABOVE A DIRECTOIRE LIMESTONE MANTEL; CIRCA-1970 GEORGES PELLETIER CERAMIC PENDANT LIGHTS.







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 SLOANEM, 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.





BRENT AND BERKUS'S RH BED, DRESSED IN MATTEO LINENS, IS FLANKED BY 1970S ITALIAN TABLES. THE CIRCA-1960 CHAIRS WEAR AN EDELMAN LEATHER SUEDE. CIRCA-1950 FRENCH BRONZE SAUCER LIGHT; CUSTOM ROMAN SHADES BY THE SHADE STORE; MARIA PERGAY STEEL TABLE; HD BUTTERCUP RUG.

pieces by the likes of Jacques Adnet, Maria Pergay, Angelo Mangiarotti, and Afra and Tobia Scarpa. The through line is the doggedly neutral palette; Berkus and Brent rely on texture and patina to animate their personal interiors. “We chose to use more country antiques because they already feel timeworn. Another ding just adds to the life of the pieces,” Berkus explains, continuing, “When you live with a small child, you don’t want to feel beholden to your possessions.”

The one exception to the rainbow-of-beige rule is Poppy’s bedroom and playroom. “She’s obsessed with pink and princesses—big shocker—so we try to keep the color and chaos confined to her zone,” Berkus explains. “But we like to help curate,” Brent adds, with an inflection that suggests not just any polyester princess getup will do. In her bedroom, Poppy has the beginnings of a proper art collection, stocked with gifts from her parents’ friends, including a dreamy mobile by Julia Condon and a Michael Hainey hummingbird painting.

For Berkus and Brent, the one other space that seems to deviate from the distilled masculinity of

“We don’t like to live with a lot of color,” *Brent* says. *Berkus* chimes in, “Or any!”

the rest of the house is the master bathroom, which features hand-painted murals by James Mobley along with architectural details of a Prunella marble richly veined in deep purple and brown. “The stone’s a little weird for us, but we loved it,” Berkus confesses. “It has an old Venetian quality, and that influenced the molding profiles.”

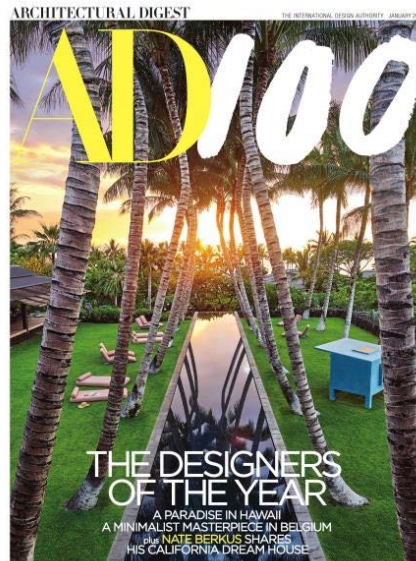
The couple took advantage of the ample space beyond the bathroom to install two very serious his-and-his closets. “Separate rooms are essential,” Brent avers. “When you marry a triple Virgo, there’s no way to meditate the stress away. Good closets make for a good marriage.” And that’s the gospel according to Jeremiah and Nate. ▀

IN THE MASTER BATH, A JAMES MOBLEY MURAL AND MARBLE MOLDING AND PANELS FROM WATERWORKS. TUB BY SIGNATURE HARDWARE, WITH WATERWORKS FITTINGS; DURAVIT SINK.



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