



TIME AND AGAIN

DESIGNER MATTHEW WHITE
 TRANSFORMS A LANDMARK SOLARIUM IN PASADENA
 INTO A STRIKING ROOFTOP
 LOFT THAT COMBINES OLD-WORLD
 GRANDEUR AND CONTEMPORARY VERVE

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oning page: Decorator Matthew White
 the landmark Pasadena building where
 he lives with his partner, Tom Schumacher.
 This page: In the main seating area,
 a seven-foot-tall sculpture made of con-
 vex mirrors and buttons by Clare Graham
 hangs above a banquette of White's own
 design; the large pillows are of silk taffe-
 t by the Silk Trading Co.; the gilt center
 table is mid-19th-century French, and
 the armchair, upholstered in Broadwick
 fabric by Groundworks from Lee Jofa,
 is a White Webb design. See Resources

A Moroccan Mosaic table is paired with a 19th-century Syrian table made with mother-of-pearl, and a Roman copy of the Apollo is displayed atop a pedestal designed by White. The original glass roof of the conservatory was planted over long ago. Palm trees. An intaglio dome by White. Wood and a 19th-century glass for bust of Homer in the entry; the walls are painted in Starburst Orange by Designer Moore. See the source.



IT WAS JUST 100 YEARS AGO that a quiet place north of Los Angeles was one of the loveliest on Earth. Cool, misty canyons, air tinged with eucalyptus and orange blossom, and, best of all, a glorious climate. Pasadena had it all. Doctors prescribe winter stays for ailing millionaires, and the otherwise healthy, wealthy, and fashionable flocked there, too. Pasadena today is in many ways unchanged. It's picturesque and historic, with a slightly caught-out-of-time charm—qualities that drew decorator Matthew White and theater producer Tom Schumacher here long ago. Devoted Italiophiles, the pair settled into a 1920s-era Italian-revival villa White described as "the most beautiful house in the world." And maybe it was. When White and Schumacher, spending an increasing amount of time in New York, came to the decision to downsize, the place sold before it was even on the market. "We were packed and out in six weeks," recalls Schumacher, the head of Disney's theatrical arm and the producer of such megahits as *The Lion King* and *Aida*. They rented a cottage from a friend while they looked for a new home, and soon found a dazzler: the former rooftop conservatory of a grand hotel, which had been converted to an apartment building in the 1920s. Inspired partly by ornate turn-of-the-century Victorian architecture, the structure itself, dating from 1899, was spectacular and jam-packed with the classic associations (Moorish, Spanish, and Turkish) White and Schumacher loved. The apartment, too, was stunning, with iron trusses from its days as a solarium and walls of windows looking up toward the mountains and down to the town. Between the drama of the space and the mélange of architectural references, White was besotted. "Things that are purely one style are boring for me," says the decorator.



like a mix. The word eclectic is overused, but this is definitely an eclectic mix of ancient cultures."

Since the building was designated a landmark inside and out, the most graceful way into a renovation was to return the place to its former grandeur. And so White proceeded. Plaster column capitals were recast to their Corinthian glory. Walls were removed to open the space up, as it originally had been. A kitchen and bathroom that had been added after the initial construction were gutted and updated with simple fixtures. And to compensate for the fact that he wasn't allowed to add so much as a closet, White sneaked in storage wherever possible—under the bed, in end tables, and most visibly, in a nearly floor-to-ceiling structure that houses the couple's clothes. "Everything had to be approved by the city and historical society," remembers White. "They watched our contractors 24 hours a day."

The result is a rarity anywhere, much less in the L.A. area—a distinctly 19th-century loft. Yet for White, decorating it presented an unexpected challenge. "I'd never done a loft before," he says. "A 40-by-40-foot



A Fortuny light by Venetia Stüd, a set of 17th-century Italian engravings in the dining area. Facing page, 1. Sculptures are displayed on an iron glass table designed by White; the chairs are from the estate of Tony D. The Venetian gilt-wood armchair, 1740, the antique lamp is cast iron. Woodblock print is by Roger Ho. In the kitchen, a Viking range and hood, cabinetry by White Webb. See Ho



White designed the platform bed, the silk curtains are from India, and the artwork hangs by Venetia Studio. See page 100 for more. From top: The 19th-century architecture reflects Italian, French, and Islamic influences; White installed a series of arches on a terrace, and the brass lanterns are from Morocco. The bath fittings are vintage-style, and the shower curtain is suspended from a metal ring over the tub. See Resources.



room is big—it's enormous. I loved the scale, but what kind of sofa do you use in it?" Ultimately, he chose to compartmentalize, creating an office/library, a generous seating area with an ultralong sofa, a dining space, and in a corner lined with luxe mocha silk curtains, a bed that doubles as a divan or ottoman, depending on how one curls up.

To give the open expanse a focal point, White hung a quirky seven-foot-tall mirror—which looks like the fantastic altarpiece from a Byzantine church—over the sofa. He also added Moroccan, Turkish, and other exotic touches, so that even with all the greenery on the terrace outside, the feeling is more Orient-Express than Southern California. Now, says White, the space reflects not so much America as a mix of Istanbul, Venice, and New York. It's that transcontinental feel that resonates with Schumacher, who is as enamored with his partner's handwork as with the charms and conveniences of Pasadena. "It's like Manhattan," he says, "you walk out the door and there are a dozen movie theaters, 30 restaurants, museums. You never have to get in the car." ■