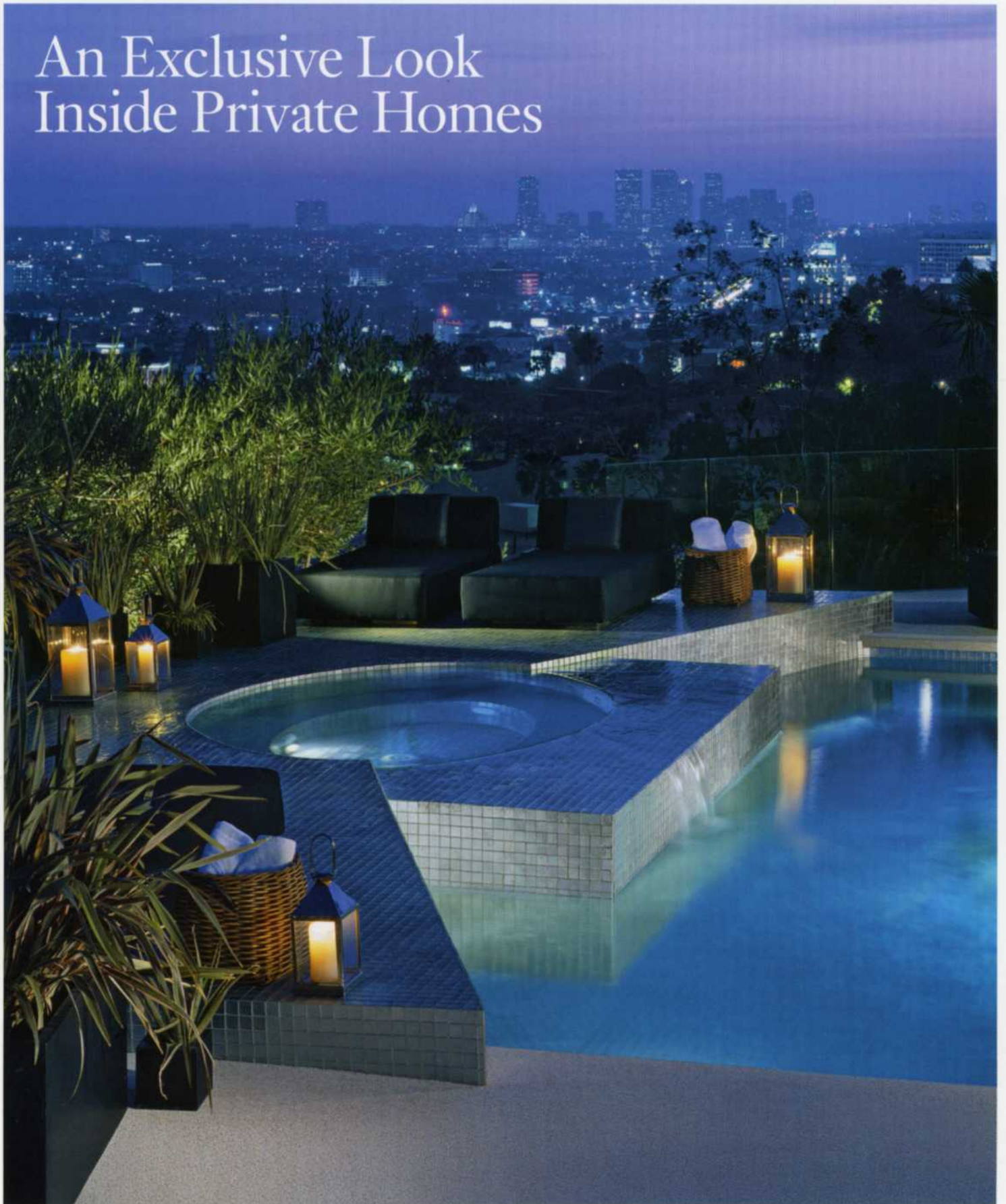


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Old World and New

A HARMONIOUS EVOLUTION FOR A 1920S HOUSE ON LAKE MICHIGAN

Architecture by Marvin Herman & Associates/Interior Design by Mariette Himes Gomez, ASID
Landscape Architecture by Heynssens + Grassman/Text by Amanda Vaill/Photography by Tony Soluri

The client's brief to Mariette Himes Gomez was a daunting one: "Make this the best house you have ever done."

But to the designer, it was less a challenge than an invitation. A self-described minimalist with a strong classic sensibility whose work is more client-driven than style-driven, Gomez immediately took to the 1929 French Normandy-style house on the shores of Lake Michigan. "It's a masterpiece of building," she says, "with lovely details throughout. What it needed was the perfect balance of appropriate furnishings and decoration."

In finding that balance, Gomez was fortunate to have an enthusiastic and



sympathetic client, who was, she says, "incredibly involved." A financial services professional with a young family, he had spent several years in Europe, where he developed an eye for English and French antiques and art. Gomez was also teamed with architect Marvin Herman, whose responsiveness to his client's instincts echoed hers and whose passion for the project was infectious.

"This house is a charmer," says Herman. "It's well proportioned and well balanced. And it has a fascinating history. The first owner was an amateur opera singer who created a two-story music gallery for her performances; it had a double-arm staircase leading to a stage on the second level."

"We seamlessly incorporated a number of additions to the house in the same architectural style," designer Mariette Himes Gomez (opposite below) says of a French Normandy-style residence on Chicago's Lake Michigan, which she and architect Marvin Herman renovated for a couple. Architect Ernest Mayo designed the original house in 1929. OPPOSITE: The front entrance. THIS PAGE: The sofas in the living room are copies of a Syrie Maugham original. Stark drapery fabric.



“Part of my job description is to find the perfect place for every piece,” says Mariette Himes Gomez.

In 1931 she added a Prohibition-era entertainment room with a bar area hidden behind paneling that opened at the touch of a button. And as an antidote to cold midwestern winters, the walls were covered with canvas panels depicting a fanciful, vaguely Moroccan seacoast, lush with date palms; the floor was paved with cobalt-blue Mediterranean tiles, and the ceiling was painted with silver leaf. The rest of the house was somewhat less whimsical but equally rich in detail: The dining room was paneled in walnut, the music gallery’s walls were picked out with plasterwork, and the library’s ceiling was coffered with 1,000 squares, each imprinted with a different rose. But by the time the client saw it, the house had suffered from the vicissitudes of time, including water damage, and the depredations of a previous owner’s dog, whose sprints through the double-height gallery had left deep claw marks in the parquetry floor.

None of this mattered to the client, an aficionado of historic buildings who immediately fell in love with the place and gave Herman and Gomez the task of transforming it into the home of his dreams. As it turned out, Herman had a head start: His firm had carried out a mid-1990s renovation of the house for an earlier client—“an immense help to us,” he says, “because we could see what we could have or should have done to it before.”

This time around, Herman was charged with expanding the residence for his new client’s family and bringing it into the 21st century while restoring the glorious features that had made the client want it in the first place. This involved adding a bedroom wing with playroom, offices,

The Dunes at Knocke, Belgium, by Camille Pissarro hangs above the fireplace in the reading room. The chesterfield dates to circa 1880. A circa 1850 carved oak writing table and chair, attributed to Carl Leistler, are by the window. The carpet is from Doris Leslie Blau.





