

Iconic California architect George Washington Smith designed the circa-1920 Santa Barbara home's center section with its three Palladian-influenced windows as his professional studio and part of his larger personal residence, which was later subdivided. Cabana Home renovated the interior, including two side wings added by a previous owner/architect. Grace Design Associates, Inc., renovated the hardscape and gardens, using new custom tile for the Moorish star medallion. Wheeler's Dwarf Pittosporum is the low-mounding plant; variegated tobira is the medium; and the tree in the foreground marks the start of a black acacia allee original to Smith's time. **RIGHT** Potted plants are an integral part of the courtyard rehab.

History Lessons

AN HISTORIC HOME AND GARDENS IN SANTA BARBARA COME INTO THEIR OWN WITH INTEGRITY AND GRACE IN A MINDFULLY BEAUTIFUL RENOVATION THAT BUILDS ON THE PAST **TEXT BY CANDACE ORD MANROE | PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK LOHMAN AND HOLLY LEPERE**



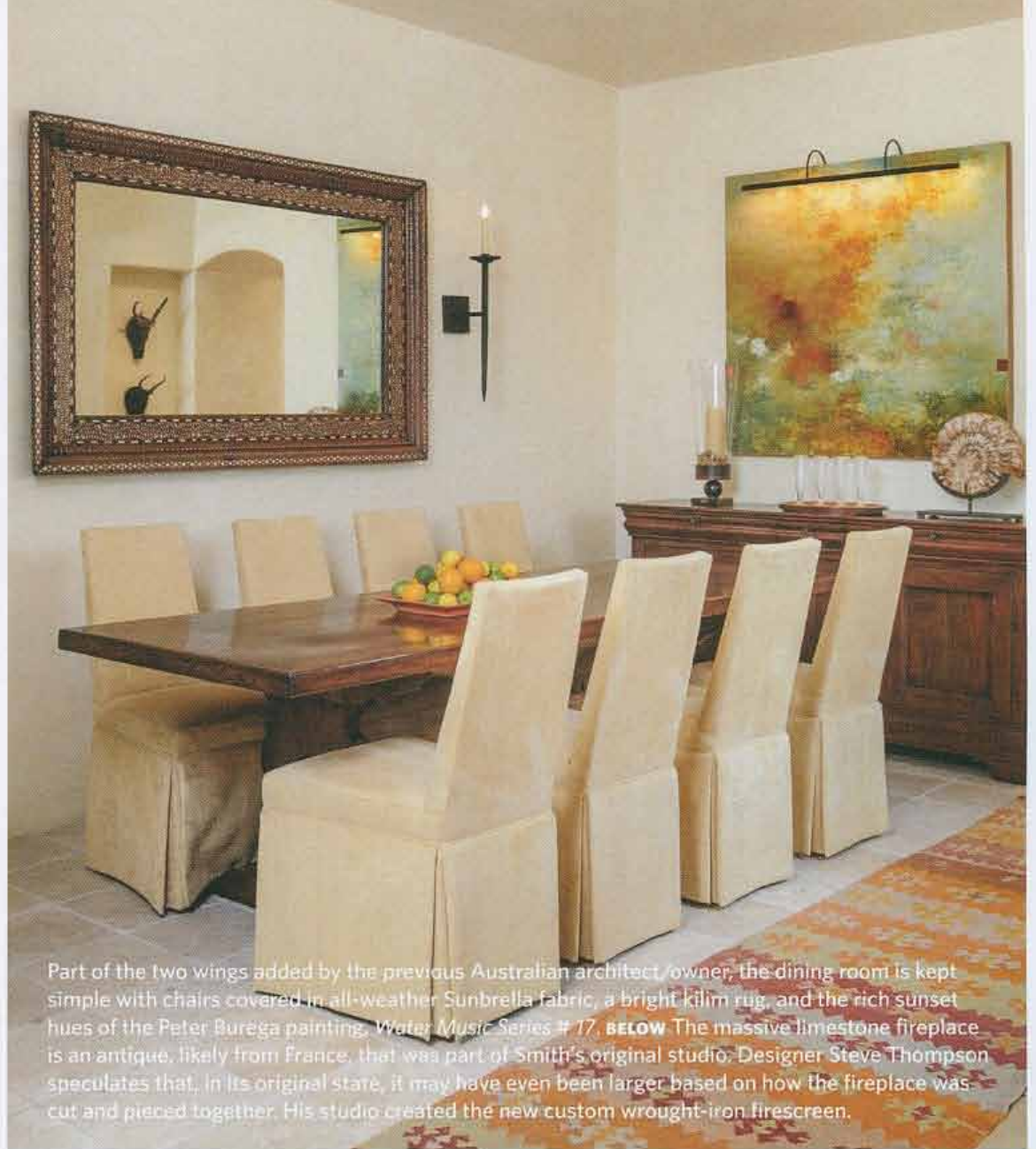
“WHAT WOULD GEORGE WASHINGTON SMITH DO?”

At the end of the day, everyday on the job, only this question bristled with primacy for the interior and landscape design teams renovating the circa-1920 Santa Barbara property built and owned by architect George Washington Smith—GWS, as the iconic architect came to be known in the designers’ shorthand. Channeling Smith, anticipating what his next design move might be for the property were he still alive, was a worthy preoccupation shared by the current homeowner as well as the professionals for an obvious reason. “George Washington Smith is regarded as the father of California’s Spanish Colonial Revival style,” explains Steve Thompson, the project’s lead designer and a principal of Cabana Homes. Because what has become the state’s quintessential architectural style—its signature, as ubiquitous as the lemon tree or celebrity sightings—traces to Smith, the chance to refresh one of his original designs was a coveted opportunity. “We all agreed it was important to preserve George W. Smith’s work and continue in a style he would’ve approved,” says Margie Grace, owner of Grace Landscape Design Associates, which renovated the grounds and created a more clearly articulated front entry.

Such a straightforward strategy didn’t ensure a simple undertaking. “Before zoning and historic ordinances, Smith’s original property was carved into three pieces,” says Grace. The only original architectural structure remaining on this piece of the split was Smith’s one-room design studio where he and his protégé, Lulah Marie Riggs, worked. The property’s subsequent owner, an Australian architect, had converted the studio into a private contemporary home, adding two side wings that wrap around a center courtyard in a horseshoe shape. “The goal was to respect the historic nature of the

Smith's original studio functions as the living room, retaining its original Spanish Colonial Revival features like the intricate dark-stained ceiling and deep-set windows. New picture lighting was added to the ceiling to highlight a newly acquired collection of paintings by California artist Mary Heebner.





Part of the two wings added by the previous Australian architect/owner, the dining room is kept simple with chairs covered in all-weather Sunbrella fabric, a bright kilim rug, and the rich sunset hues of the Peter Buręga painting, *Water Music Series # 17*. **BELOW** The massive limestone fireplace is an antique, likely from France, that was part of Smith's original studio. Designer Steve Thompson speculates that, in its original state, it may have even been larger based on how the fireplace was cut and pieced together. His studio created the new custom wrought-iron firescreen.

property and to land somewhere in between the historic and contemporary style," says Thompson.

With its distinctive triple arched glass doorways, the original studio is the home's centerpiece and living room. "True to the Andalusian style (which Smith became fond of on a trip to Spain in 1914), it has simple lines and simple details. Its use of exposed wood for detailing is an Andalusian feature that probably relates to Spain's arid climate and lack of forest," explains Thompson. Lighting the distinctive, intricately beamed ceiling—all original GHS—required dexterous tiptoeing by Cabana Homes. "The living room's interior lighting had to be augmented without interfering with the historic legacy," Thompson explains. "The dark stained ceiling there and the wood ceiling that had been added by the previous owner in the kitchen and master bedroom all absorbed natural light, so we added lighting to niches. We also opened up the niches with glass shelves to further reflect light, and we discretely tucked lighting into the ceiling beams and even into the unseen far corners of the ceiling alcoves."

The refresh meant "we touched almost every surface," he adds. Whenever new features like windows were required, Thompson took cues from the past.

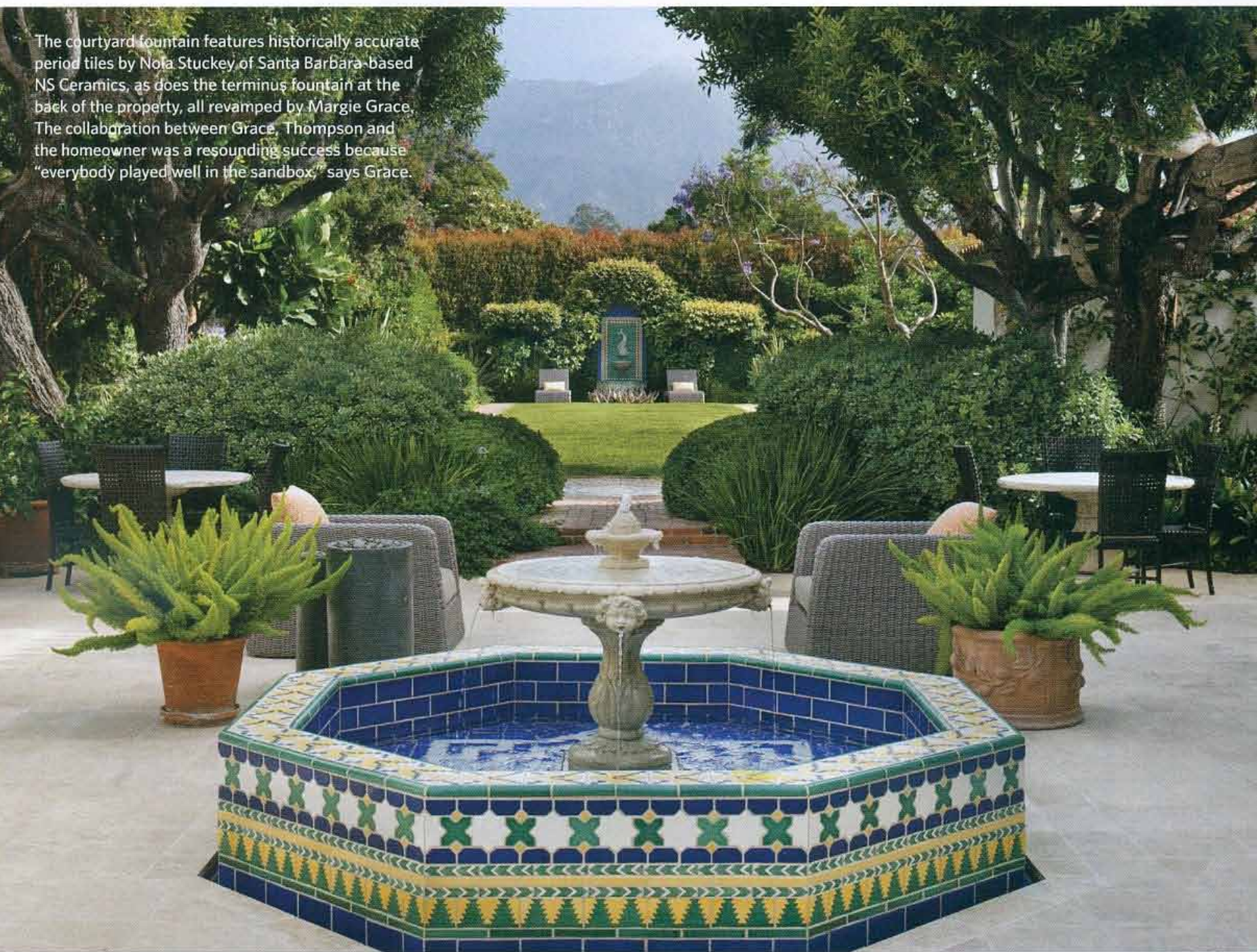




ABOVE A vivid orange and highly textural guestroom opens up to the property's original koi pond revived by landscaper Margie Grace. **RIGHT** The master bedroom's ebony four-poster Henredon bed upholstered in a pale Perennials Outdoor textile from Cabana Home is a study in light and dark. Extra storage is provided at the foot of the bed by a tufted white bench covered in a Lee faux suede. Stag horn lamps with black silk shades flank the bed for reading.



The courtyard fountain features historically accurate period tiles by Nola Stuckey of Santa Barbara-based NS Ceramics, as does the terminus fountain at the back of the property, all revamped by Margie Grace. The collaboration between Grace, Thompson and the homeowner was a resounding success because “everybody played well in the sandbox,” says Grace.



“Signature GW Smith wood windows that were deeply recessed and shuttered worked beautifully with newer windows we introduced elsewhere and dressed with Conrad Shades,” he notes. Travertine flooring that had been added by the previous owner in the living room and courtyard was retained. “I don’t come to a place and say ‘we must erase all traces of the previous owner,’” Grace explains. “It made no sense to jackhammer all that travertine.”

Indoors, Thompson warmed the sophisticated flooring with custom faux sisal and seagrass rugs. “All upholstered furniture is in outdoor Sunbrella textiles and outdoor leather, inside and out,” he adds. “What looks like a pair of fragile white sofas in the living room are actually upholstered in very durable Sunbrella textile”—a hardy, practical solution that fits neatly into the GWS mindset. It also accommodates the current owner’s lifestyle. “She wanted it to be a home that you could comfortably live in, have dogs in, have grandkids in, and entertain in,” Thompson notes.

As a gardener and newcomer to the state, the owner wanted to devote equal attention to the outdoors, determined to savor every minute of her new opportunity for indoor-outdoor living. “She was

all about bright oranges and yellows she could enjoy year-round,” recalls Grace. “Pots were important. Coming from Montauk, she spoke gardener, but not the local dialect. She wanted fruit trees. It’s pretty cool to be able to pick lemons from your lawn when you’re from back East,” she says.

Certain features of the landscape obviously dated to GWS’s time and merited careful preservation. “The allee of black acacia trees was already there,” notes Grace. The koi pond outside the orange guest room was preexisting but in need of a facelift. “We edited and enhanced all the plant material. It’s what we call a botanical comb-over,” she laughs. She strengthened the bones of the hardscape, replacing ‘90s spec materials for historically accurate Moorish-style tiles on the fountains and medallion, and she built up plant materials to soften the views of the Santa Ynez Mountains and the Los Padres National Forest. “What we ended up with,” concludes Thompson, “is a home that is not a museum to Smith and Lulah Marie Riggs, but a workable home that maintains a sophisticated and comfortable co-existence with both traditional and modern elements.”

Not surprisingly, it seems exactly what GWS would do. **CH**