

california

HOME+DESIGN

STATE OF THE ART

INSIDE FIVE COLLECTORS' HOUSES

THE BEAUTY OF EVERYDAY OBJECTS

SCULPTURAL WAYS TO LIGHT UP A ROOM

Designer Betsy Burnham perfects the art of display in a Brentwood bungalow.



FOR THE LOVE OF ART

THIS MONTH, *CH+D* OFFERS A PEEK INSIDE THE HOMES OF ART COLLECTORS—BE THEY PATRONS OF WORLD-CLASS MUSEUMS OR JUST STARTING OUT. FROM A WOODSIDE FAMILY GETAWAY (SEEN HERE) TO A SAN FRANCISCO PIED À TERRE, EACH OFFERS A DIFFERENT LESSON ABOUT THE IMPACT OF DISPLAY.



The gardens, designed by San Francisco landscape architect Tito Patri, create intimate courtyards and canvases of green for Francisco Zúñiga's bronze sculptures.

BOLD STROKES

AT ONCE VIBRANT AND SERENE, THE WOODSIDE ESTATE THAT ARCHITECT DAVID ALLEN SMITH AND INTERIOR DESIGNER BARBARA SCAVULLO BUILT FOR A FAMILY OF FIVE IS A LESSON IN THE SUBTLE ART OF JUXTAPOSITION.

BY JEAN VICTOR PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW MILLMAN

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hen architect David Allen Smith was enlisted to design an 11-acre family compound in Woodside, he faced two challenges. Not only did the structures need to accommodate a family of five but they also needed to provide a congenial setting for the owners' extensive collection of contemporary Mexican art. The collection features dramatic large-scale works by such 20th-century Oaxacan masters as Rodolfo Morales and Rufino Tamayo, as well as bronze sculptures by Francisco Zúñiga. Bold in color with fantastical imagery, the paintings—designers and homeowners agreed—required an architectural backdrop that could hold its own without competing with the artwork.

Taking inspiration from Mexican vernacular residential design, Smith created a cluster of buildings using natural materials and embodying a simplicity of form. Encompassing a 10,000-square-foot main house as well as two guesthouses, a fitness building, a studio, an office, two garages and a barn, the collection of structures is completely at home in the California landscape. Thick stucco or stone walls, exposed heavy-framed timber and antique terra-cotta roof tiles make up the spare exterior palette. Decorative architectural details are kept to a minimum to allow the integrity of the natural materials to stand out.

"I wanted the spaces to flow and have continuity, but to appear as if they weren't built all at once, as you see in small villages where buildings are added to over time," says Smith. "It's the combination of these simple forms that collectively make it interesting." Working with landscape architect Tito Patri, Smith linked the structures with interior courtyards and redwood trellises draped with wisteria and star jasmine. "They feel like green hallways," Smith says.

Colorful glazed tiles at play in the kitchen are balanced by the rusticity of the antique oak floors and recycled fir ceiling. A walnut shelf is floated on the island for an extra serving surface.

Inside the house, designer Barbara Scavullo furthered the theme of authenticity by paying meticulous attention to everything from lighting to drawer pulls. "Every single square inch of the house was viewed through the same lens to make sure it was consistent yet fresh," she says. Most of the compositional elements are imbued with the patina of age. Flooring materials include antique limestone, recycled French oak, and antique terra-cotta tiles. "Old materials have an honesty and truth you just can't get by adding texture to something new," she says.

The primitive yet contemporary spirit of the paintings was a constant inspiration as Scavullo went about selecting materials and



In the sitting area off the kitchen, African chairs from the 1940s, decorated with beads, shells and embroidery, are one of many examples of vintage tribal design elements used throughout the house.

A lone manzanita branch in the dining room contrasts with bold works of art by such contemporary Mexican masters as Rufino Tamayo and Rodolfo Morales, whose large-scale painting marks the entrance to the dining room.



“In this house, things are either very simple, or they’re quite decorative.”



furnishings. To balance the saturated hues and emotional power of the art, she made a point of surrounding each bold piece with softer elements. "In this house, things are either very simple, or they're quite decorative," she says. "The rooms jump from a Zen-like simplicity to a much more colorful, lively energy."

The dining room is a case in point. One of the more understated spaces in the house, it contains the first piece of furniture that Scavullo acquired for the project: a white oak chair by Dakota Jackson.

"Rarely do you start a house with the dining room chair, but it was unlike any chair I'd ever seen," she says. "It has an almost primitive quality, yet it's very comfortable, so it matched what I was trying to achieve with this project." She upholstered the seats in a Fortuny fabric, creating an unexpected juxtaposition of formal and primitive. An intensely hued terra-cotta wall in the adjacent gallery provides the backdrop for the largest Morales painting in the couple's collection.

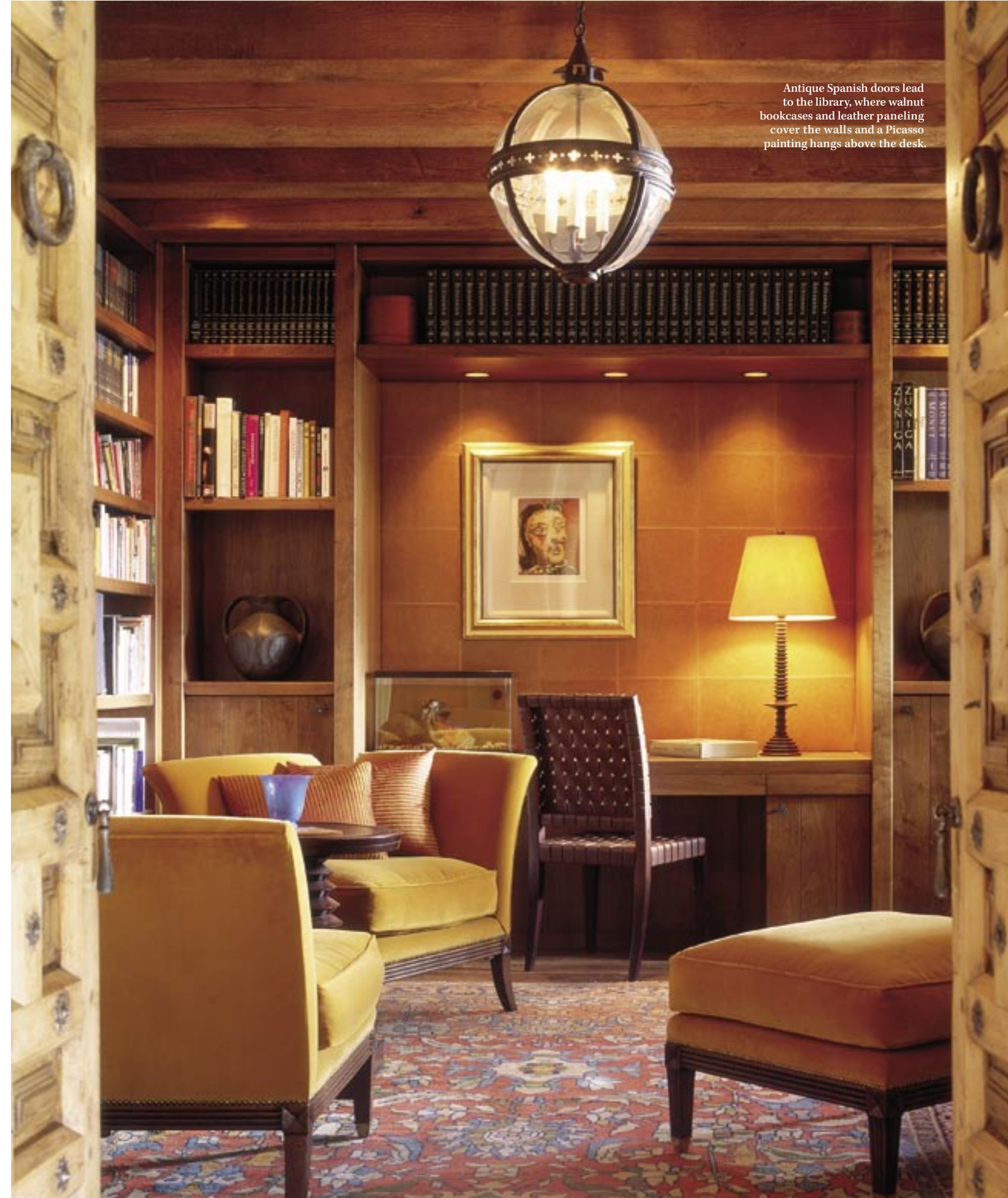
Unabashed use of color continues in the kitchen, with its mosaic of French ceramic tiles. "My client loves color, so we used them all," Scavullo says. The island, a romantic curve of plaster and lava stone, balances the rusticity of the recycled Douglas fir beams overhead and creates a divider between the kitchen and the 18th-century Spanish Baroque trestle table in the family dining area. A pair of African beaded chairs from the 1940s engages in a playful dialogue with the tiles in the kitchen.

The chairs are just one example of the ethnic elements Scavullo used throughout the project. A chance discovery of 1920s African kente cloths at a tribal arts and textile show started her on a quest for vintage tribal fabrics. She used kente cloths for seat cushions on a pair of sofas in the family room and

Stone walls give the family room a warm, hearth-like feel, while the rich red in the rug softens the space. Seat cushions on the sofas are upholstered in vintage African kente cloths.

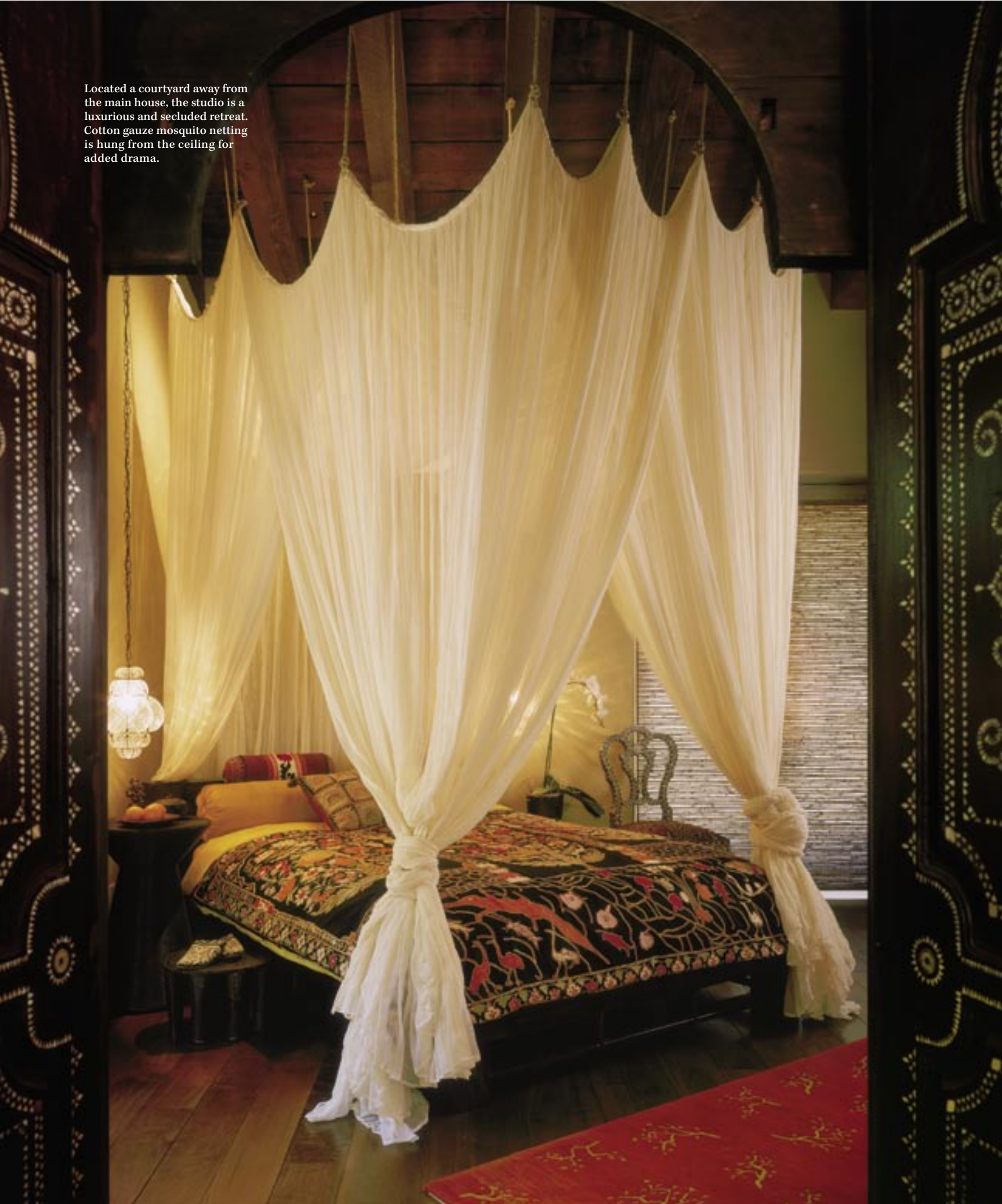
kuba cloths, and embroideries from Silk Road traders for pillows and tapestries in many of the bedrooms. In the studio, with its antique Balinese mother of pearl bathroom doors and billowing mosquito netting, a 19th-century Kashmiri tent panel covers the bed.

Vintage Persian rugs soften the stone floors. The rugs contribute to the understated luxury of the library, which features leather-upholstered walls and floor-to-ceiling bookcases. Antique 18th-century Spanish doors contribute to the sense of history, as does a prized Picasso painting. "I like to mix antiques and one-of-



Antique Spanish doors lead to the library, where walnut bookcases and leather paneling cover the walls and a Picasso painting hangs above the desk.

Located a courtyard away from the main house, the studio is a luxurious and secluded retreat. Cotton gauze mosquito netting is hung from the ceiling for added drama.



a-kind pieces with more ordinary elements,” says Scavullo. “I don’t want anything to scream out at you.”

Finding just the right touches sometimes proved challenging. “We were creating an aesthetic with few precedents—breaking new ground by building a rustic contemporary house in present-day America,” says Scavullo. “You can tell a contractor to build a straight line, but how do you build in imperfection?” For instance, while designing the master bath, Scavullo found the bath accessories on the market “too hard-edged, slick or fancy.” She enlisted a local ironsmith to create simple, straightforward fixtures. The resulting custom-designed towel bars resemble an iron rope, slightly relaxed in the middle. “They exactly match the feeling of the house,” says Scavullo. The freestanding tub, custom crafted with a hardened stucco surround and cast-concrete top, appears to float on the antique Jerusalem stone floor, coordinating uncannily with the Morales painting located on the wall above it. As Scavullo says, “Even though I didn’t reference the art during the course of the project, I think because there was a consistency to everything we did, it all works together on a very elemental level.” ■

ABOVE: The grid pattern on the doors in the veranda is repeated inside the house on cabinetry and sliding doors. RIGHT: In the master bathroom, a painting by Rodolfo Morales hangs above the tub. Antique Jerusalem stone on the floor adds a rustic patina.

