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FOR ROSE TARLOW, the challenge was to make her residence look as though it had grown from its site as naturally as the trees that surround it. "I was trying to prove to myself that you can create an ageless house," she recalls, "just as I try to design furniture that has a period flavor but with its own unique personality. Every attempt I have seen to make new houses look old has failed, so I considered remodeling the existing house on the site. But, after a week, the contractor told me that it made no sense to try, and I tore it down."

The real estate agent who first showed her the property five years ago apologized for the lack of views. "I prefer to look out at trees, not buildings or people," Tarlow told him. "I've always wanted to live in the English countryside." She created her pastoral retreat by widening the site, a narrow ledge on the side of a leafy canyon in southern California. Dirt was trucked in for the garden, which she planted with Italian stone pines and California pepper trees.

She decided that her new house would occupy the footprint of the old and sketched a modern structure. It looked too much like a train, she decided, and quickly substituted a design that fuses past and present, richness and austerity. The exterior was conceived as an unornamented shell of buff bricks, to be planted with fast-growing creeper. The interior would combine stucco walls with antique wood and stone. The first phase of the house comprised three major rooms—kitchen, living room and master bedroom—arranged in a linear sequence. Later, she extended the house, making the first kitchen an intimate dining room, and adding a farmhouse kitchen beyond, with two guest bedrooms above.

A draftsman made working drawings from her sketches, an engineer

"I always wanted to have a house in the European countryside, but it wasn't possible for me, so I created one," says designer and antiques dealer Rose Tarlow of her southern California residence. **BELOW:** Tarlow in the garden, where an Italian stone pine shades a seating area made of 17th-century French stone.

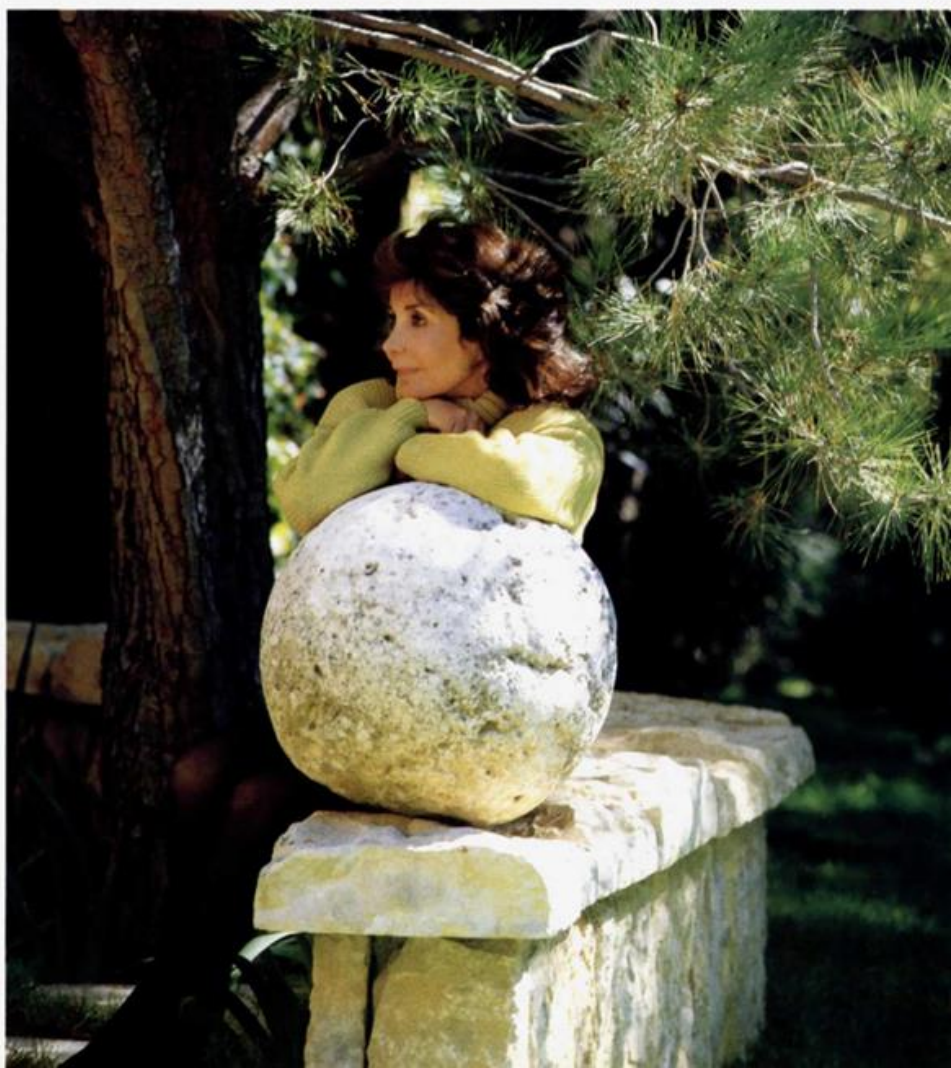
"I found the fireplaces and other architectural elements for the house, but many of the objects are things I've had for years," she says. **RIGHT:** Above a mantel in the living room is a 17th-century Flemish walnut mirror. An American tin weathervane, Tang Dynasty jars and iron Betty lamps provide accents.



California Pastoral

Evoking a European Country Aesthetic in a Designer's Canyon Refuge

INTERIOR DESIGN BY ROSE TARLOW, ASID
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OPPOSITE AND COVER: "I encouraged the creeper—though it's wildly impractical," she says. A 17th-century lectern stands by a French door in the living room. On the Ming scholar's desk are antique Thai horses, an Indian alabaster ribbed bowl and a Greek marble fragment.



"The crossbeams for the ceiling in the living room came from an eleventh-century church in Kent, southeast of London, and were almost petrified with age," the designer says. The floors are 17th-century oak, and the lateral beams are also 17th century. Slipcovered English chairs echo the symmetry of the built-in bookcases and 18th-century French doors.





"My taste has become progressively simpler, but if I take something into my house, I'll never sell it," says Tarlow. LEFT: A Jean Coc-teau drawing rests above a 17th-century French fireplace in the living room. Qianlong bowls complement the Song storage jar on the mantel.

checked the plans, and a contractor built the structure. At every stage, Tarlow improvised on the design, "changing walls and ceiling heights until the proportions were just right." The smooth-troweled walls have deep reveals and irregular, unreinforced corners. "Totally impractical," she admits. "They crumble at every collision. But I hate phony rough finishes. These walls look as though they've been cut from butter with a knife."

The old dressed stone pavers in the dining room and kitchen came from France. They were sliced in two, and the rough-cut bottom halves were used in the garden. The workshops that execute her furniture designs installed the antique floorboards, ceilings and bedroom paneling. Six me-



"I mixed Oriental pieces with country furniture," she says. "Because they're simple, they blend well." ABOVE: By the bookshelves are a 17th-century Japanese carved wood sheepdog and antique English library steps; the penultimate step holds a Roman carved marble foot.

"I collect books on architecture, literature, art, and furniture and interior design," Tarlow says. "Some of them are good old first editions, and some are just old books." BELOW: An antique American basket is by the door, contrasting with a 17th-century-style sofa.







"Most of the time I entertain informally—perhaps a buffet featuring simple country cooking—nothing fancy or pretentious," says Tarlow. Leather-and-wood antique Spanish chairs surround the plank-top pearwood dining table. The Welsh 18th-century burl walnut dresser holds the designer's collection of treen and 18th-century English pewter, along with native American baskets.





LEFT: An 18th-century wing chair is paired with a 17th-century French panel-back chair by the kitchen fireplace. Arranged on the mantel are an 18th-century French birdcage, American baskets and a Leedsware covered dish. An old French wicker hammock has been placed above the Louis XIII walnut armoire.

dieval beams that she acquired from a demolished English church proved to be an exact fit for the living room.

The handsomely proportioned living room evokes the rustic splendor of an eighteenth-century Venetian villa. In the afternoon, sunlight dapples the polished floorboards and accentuates the paleness of the walls, slipcovers and vellum-bound books. "I have very masculine taste," asserts Tarlow, "and I prefer a small palette of neutral colors, which is why I rarely buy paintings, only drawings." But the severity her preference might imply



ABOVE: Tole 18th-century leaves—"prettier than a living thing"—fill an 18th-century wood mortar in the dining room. Beside it are Bristol blue glass bottles. BELOW: Antique comb-back chairs encircle an English gateleg table in the kitchen. In the corner is a rack Tarlow built into the wall to hold dishes. Hanging above the table is a bird from the Pyrenees.



Every piece of wood in Rose Tarlow's house has been polished smooth over generations.

"I dislike the fusty colors of old tapestries, but this *fleur de chou* fragment, with its bold green leaves, has a modern feeling," explains Tarlow. Antique painted metal push-up candlesticks are displayed with carved wood crow sculptures from Thailand and an American burlwood footed bowl on the dining table.

is softened by the intrusion of creeper from the outdoors. Delicate tendrils stray in through French doors and climb across the ceiling beams like spiders weaving their webs.

The master bedroom is as lofty as the living room it adjoins, but the mood is dramatically different. French pine paneling gives both bedroom and bath a feminine grace and delicacy. The imposing bed, canopied in the same flowered silk used for the

draperies, is the only object in the house that Tarlow designed. "I would rather have a fabulous piece from my own workshop than a mediocre antique," she declares. "I never thought I'd find a bed as pretty as one I could design." She did find the Régence and Regency chairs that sit so well with the lacquered late-seventeenth-century secretary. Contemporary figurative prints provide good company for the antiques. There, as elsewhere



in the house, the structure serves as a frame for the disparate furnishings and objects that seem to have drifted together and found their appropriate places in the succession of high- and low-ceilinged rooms.

"Whenever I design a house for myself, it's the same as when I was a little girl," says Rose Tarlow. "What matters is how the living space affects my life." Her first experience in design was redoing her room at a soror-

ity house; more recently she reshaped her apartment on London's Belgrave Square (see *Architectural Digest*, March 1989). While she owns and operates an antiques shop, Melrose House, she hesitates before taking on outside design commissions. "Clients want you to stick to the plan they approved," she says. "There is always an element of chance in laying out an interior, and I like to improvise and rearrange.

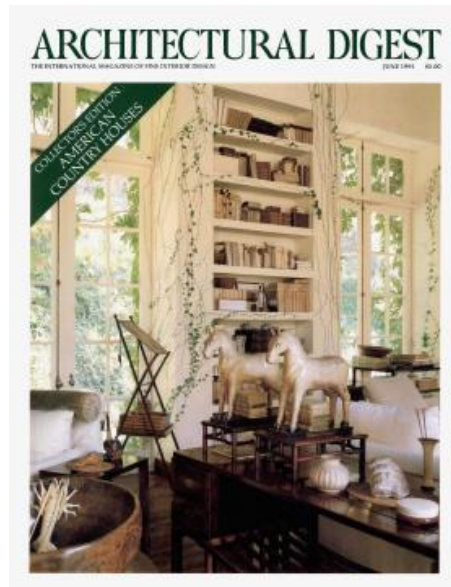
continued on page 192

"A house is not an extension of the world," she says. "It should nurture you—take you out of your everyday routine and into your own haven." Tarlow designed the canopied bed in the master bedroom, which complements the 17th-century William and Mary secretary and the Queen Anne sofa in the alcove.



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