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HOUSE

Designer Martyn Lawrence Bullard creates a Los Angeles home that's both child-friendly and bursting with flair for Sir Elton John and David Furnish's newly expanded family

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Above: Sir Elton John (seated on a marble chair by artist Ai Weiwei) and David Furnish at their 1960s Beverly Hills, California, residence, which was decorated by Martyn Lawrence Bullard. **Right:** Bullard designed the terrace's sofas, covered in a Summit Furniture fabric, and concrete tables; the sculpture is by Roy Lichtenstein, the pool's limestone coping is by Ann Sacks, and Stephen Block of Inner Gardens did the landscape design. For details see Sources.





"IT'S QUINTESSENTIAL L.A.," SAYS FURNISH.
"AND IT'S PERFECT FOR ZACHARY," ADDS JOHN.
"HE JUST CHARGES THROUGH THE HOUSE
LIKE A LITTLE FIRECRACKER."



A vibrant digital print by Jeremy Blake sets the chromatic tone in the living room, which is anchored by a Willy Rizzo-style pink-lacquer cocktail table by Lawson-Fenning; vintage sconces flank the mantel, crafted of Corian, and a David LaChapelle photograph hangs on the far wall. Bullard designed the club chairs—upholstered in a Mongolian-lamb fabric from Mimi London—and Vladimir Kagan-inspired sofas. The chinchilla throw is by Loro Piana, and the aluminum side table is from Ligne Roset; the carpet is a prototype design by Bullard for the Rug Company.



From top: The lacquered partial wall that divides the living and family rooms hosts a neon work by Tracey Emin; paintings by Keith Haring are displayed nearby. The dining area features a vintage Paul Evans table with a customized glass top and Bullard-designed chairs; the vases are by Lalique and Venini, and the photographs in the background are by Richard Caldicott.



Given musician Sir Elton John and film producer David Furnish's reputation as savvy collectors of contemporary art, one could be forgiven for assuming that the swing set on the front lawn of their new Los Angeles house is actually some installation by an up-and-coming artist—perhaps a discovery made during John's recent concert tour. But it's a mistake to assume anything about this pair. While the home may present certain earmarks of rock-icon fabulousness (a swank Beverly Hills address, breathtaking hilltop views), in both scale and design this modernist dwelling was chosen with one overriding goal in mind: to create a comfortable West Coast base for the couple and their expanding family, which includes a two-year-old son, Zachary, and a newborn son, Elijah, who arrived just as this issue went to press.

What the two men envisioned when they began looking for a new home was a manageably sized residence from the 1960s, a period that epitomizes their shared ideal of California indoor-outdoor living. They wanted a place where their children could



Bullard conceived the family room's wall shelves and sofa (with integrated white-lacquer shelves). The black and gray pillow fabrics are by Schumacher; a hemispherical Barovier & Toso vase rests atop the custom-made table by Lawson-Fenning.

move around freely and have access to "a front and back garden and some fresh air," John says. Those were qualities their previous L.A. abode—a sleek jewel box perched on the 20th floor of a residential tower (*Architectural Digest*, December 2009)—simply did not offer. The search didn't take long. On the first day of hunting, Furnish found the nearly 5,000-square-foot, single-story structure, built in 1966 in Trousdale Estates, a neighborhood famous for its midcentury architecture. "It's quintessential L.A.," Furnish says. "I remember walking to the front door and saying, 'It's perfect.'"

"And the one-story thing is so great for Zachary," John adds. "He just charges through the house like a little firecracker!"

Still, fashioning a child-friendly environment with the visual pizzazz of their former home would require some fancy footwork, and for this they turned to renowned designer and longtime friend Martyn Lawrence Bullard. Since the Trousdale property had recently received a thorough overhaul, an initial walk-through convinced Bullard that no major structural changes were needed. He notes that the floor plan, distinguished by open living and dining areas that flow naturally into

a large eat-in kitchen, "gives the couple wonderful opportunities to entertain in the way they want to, yet also have really intimate family experiences." So once a short list of basic improvements were made (lighting and hardware upgraded, a state-of-the-art sound system installed, windows replaced with UV-resistant glass), the work of layering the interiors could begin.

As with all of the couple's residences—they also own homes in Atlanta; London; Windsor, England; Nice, France; and Venice, Italy—"everything is centered around the art," John says. For starters, Furnish and John identified key pieces to move to Beverly Hills, from paintings by Keith Haring, Damien Hirst, and Philip Taaffe to a group of Richard Caldicott's vividly hued photographs of Tupperware. "Certainly there was a family slant in the art we chose," Furnish says. "We focused on things that are colorful and positive and celebrations of life."

Decisions about the art provided Bullard with a road map for materials, color palette, even furniture placement. No piece better exemplifies this than the kaleidoscopic digital print by Jeremy Blake the couple hung above the living room mantel. In



its central position, the work served as a kind of template for colors used throughout the home's public areas, evident in everything from the living room's glossy sherbet-pink cocktail table to the shamrock-green family room sofa to the royal-blue Paul Evans dining chairs. "I love that photograph very much," remarks John. "Though I didn't expect it to inspire the decor of the house."

As a backdrop for the art, Bullard covered a number of walls in white lacquer, a high-gloss finish that's as sleek and polished as it is child-friendly. Ditto the leather and outdoor fabrics used for much of the seating. Corners were rounded for safety, and stone surfaces were treated to protect against stains. "Nothing's too precious for children to touch," Bullard says.

Well, almost. An avid collector of glass, John included a sampling from a trove that he estimates numbers around 6,000 pieces. "There's a Frank Gehry vase we often display on the dining table that's beautiful and extremely valuable, but in the other house it was in the loo, so it was a little wasted," he jokes. "I find glass to be an underrated art form. I just love all kinds of glass things on the table and on the shelves and in the bookcases."

Bullard says that while "David has a less-is-more eye, Elton loves, you know, more-is-more." At the Trousdale residence, these differing approaches find a happy balance, producing a light and airy vibe that's contrasted with striking elements such as the black-lacquer partial wall dividing the living and family rooms; one side displays a neon artwork by Tracey Emin and the other a large flat-screen television, where John indulges another of his passions: watching soccer. The shiny black is echoed in the dining room's strié wall covering, which provides a dramatic ground for lively paintings by Haring and Wang Guangyi, works on paper by Willem de Kooning, and several William Eggleston photographs. "There's major art in that room—in different genres," Bullard says. "The black unifies it."

From the public areas the house transitions gracefully into the private. The suitably glamorous master suite, which opens onto the terrace, is notable for its alpaca rug, vintage Vladimir Kagan chairs, and streamlined bed upholstered in white ostrich leather. It's a space of serene theatricality crafted to give breathing room to a showstopping focal point: 15 Robert Mapplethorpe color



photographs of flowers that line the walls and are reflected in the silver-Mylar ceiling. "On a sunny day," says Bullard, "it's truly spectacular." And a reminder that family-friendly need not be staid.

In the first part of the year, John and Furnish plan to spend a lot of time on the West Coast—Furnish producing a sequel to the hit animated film *Gnomeo & Juliet* and John working on his next album, in addition to hosting the Elton John AIDS Foundation's Academy Awards viewing party, an annual event that has raised millions for the fight against HIV/AIDS. Being in L.A. also keeps John close to Las Vegas, where he'll be performing at Caesars Palace in April and May. The musician happily acknowledges that the Trousdale home, despite its family focus, has a trace of the '70s decadence of the couple's previous L.A. abode. "I'd have to say the house is still a bit *Boogie Nights*," he says. "It's just much lighter and brighter." □



Clockwise from top left: The dining room's vintage pieces include a Georg Jensen pendant light from Ceylon et Cie, a Lucite-and-glass table by Pace International, and Paul Evans chairs; a strié wall covering by Phillip Jeffries serves as the backdrop for paintings by Haring (left) and Wang Guangyi and a group of photographs by William Eggleston; the glass vases are by Nancy Callan, and the rug is by Kyle Bunting. The kitchen's white cabinetry and Corian counters are offset by splashes of color from the 1960s Venini light fixture and vases by Lino Tagliapietra, Venini, and Steven Weinberg. In the powder room, Alvar Aalto and Venini vessels complement the Designers Guild wallpaper and the Osborne & Little fabric that covers the ceiling. Two Willem de Kooning works on paper hang next to a Bullard-designed chair and a Ligne Roset side table in the dining room.





From top: A pair of artworks by Gavin Turk and a vintage Versace vase enliven the vanity in the master bath; the sconces are vintage Mazzega from Downtown, and the shower is sheathed in Bisazza mosaic tile.

A group of rare Robert Mapplethorpe flower photographs from the 1980s grace a wall in the master bedroom. **Opposite, clockwise**

from top left: The children's bath features a vintage sconce from JF Chen, an IKEA mirror, and glass tilework designed by Bullard. Zachary's room, painted in stripes of Benjamin Moore blues, is outfitted with a vintage chrome chandelier from Downtown, a Bullard-designed daybed, a Saarinen side table for Knoll from Design Within Reach, and a carpet by the Rug Company; the artwork is by Peter Beard. In the master bedroom, a Mapplethorpe photograph is displayed behind a '70s aluminum lamp. The shoe closet, with Louis Vuitton luggage.



Clad in a silver Mylar by Astek Wallcovering, the master bedroom's ceiling reflects both the colorful Mapplethorpe photographs and the view outside. The B&B Italia bed, upholstered in an Edelman ostrich leather, is dressed in Frette linens and topped by a throw pillow in a Schumacher flame-stitch fabric. The torso sculpture is second-century Roman, the chairs and ottoman are vintage Vladimir Kagan from Bourgeois Bohème, and the alpaca carpet is by the Rug Company.



