







generation next

Talent will out. For some, recognition comes right away. For others, it takes years to make a mark. But truly dedicated artists, the ones with a personal vision and a wealth of imagination, know that the real reward is the work itself. Here's to those who keep design moving ahead.

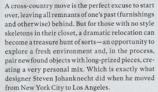
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For designer Steven Johanknecht, the move from hip downtown Manhattan to a secluded Tudor cottage in Los Angeles meant more than just a change of scenery

TEXT BY RIMA SUQI PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILLIAM ABRANOWICZ PRODUCED BY ANITA SARSIDI







For nearly two decades Johanknecht, who hails from upstate New York, lived a design-centric life



in Manhattan, creating displays for Bergdorf Goodman, overseeing store design for Barneys New York, and serving as design director for Studio Sofield. He lived in the Brevoort East-a 1960s highhis apartment with the midcentury-modern furni- ramics to fashionista-favorite Opening Ceremony. ture so coveted at that time.

with California," and when the opportunity arose clave in Silver Lake. The cottages, which line a narto move to San Francisco for a new job, he used it as row brick path and surround a fountain, are similar a two-year test of the West Coast waters before tak-

les. The move proved fortuitous: Commune, the design firm he cofounded in 2004 with Roman Alonso and siblings Pamela and Ramin Shamshiri, is red hot, and the company's serene yet hip sensirise popular with art and fashion types—and filled bility has drawn diverse clients, from Heath Ce-

It took him a year to find the right home: a small, But Johanknecht was, as he puts it, "always taken 1928 Tudor-style cottage, one of four in a hidden ento nearby houses believed to have been used by creing the plunge and putting down roots in Los Ange- ators of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Silver

FACING PAGE: Steven Johanknecht, a founder of the design firm Commune, outside his 1928 Tuder-style home in the Silver Lake neighborhood of Los Angeles. THIS FAGE: In the living room, the stainless steel-and-leather Mies van der Rohe chair is topped with a killim pillow by Commune; Johanknecht designed the cocktail table, though si vintage, and the fireplace with plantage, and the fireplace strong home in the proper strong since the cocktail table, though si vintage, and the fireplace strong home in the plantage of the strong home in the plantage of the strong home in the plantage of the strong home in the strong





Lake has long attracted creative people, including architects John Lautner (whose famous Silvertop house is there) and Richard Neutra, who built several homes and an office in the neighborhood. It continues to draw actors and artists, which was part of the allure for Johanknecht, although he acknowledges wanting a "different living experience, the antithesis of New York."

It's why this particular house appealed to him right off the bat: "It had all the advantages of indooroutdoor living, a studio where I could paint, and the quirky charm of an English cottage, but colliding with California cool." Little renovation was required. Johanknecht refinished the floors and overhauled the master bath (creating what he calls his "gentleman's bathroom"), but that was it. "This is the kind of house with a lot of original details, such as the wood beams in the kitchen and all the windows, so you can mend things, rather than renovate, and remain true to its idiosyncrasies," he explains. Some of those eccentricities—specifically, small rooms, angled walls, and low ceilings—meant that

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most of the furniture from his modernist New York City apartment would work in this 1,400-square-foot home as well. (The one piece that did not make it—a marble-top dining table—suffered a very West Coast demise when it was shattered by a coconut that fell from a palm tree). But the living room sofa, a Mies van der Rohe chair, several George Nelson pieces, a zebrawood credenza, and a carved "log" chair all found new lives in what he describes as a "storybook cottage situation."

The rest of the furnishings were gathered as the years passed, and Johanknecht continues to develop an appreciation for California craft—for what he calls a "thread of the artisan"—and for layering textures, which, not coincidentally, are trademarks of his firm's design work as well. Furniture by Californians Alma Allen (an artist in Joshua Tree who frequently collaborates with Commune). Garry Knox Bennett, and Arthur Espenet Carpenter found their way into the mix. "The house opened my eyes to other pieces," he says. "The taxidermy over the fireplace made sense, and I realized it could work with midcentury pieces."

This new perspective also allowed him to see items that he already owned in a fresh light, such as







a Jacobsen wall sconce—"it's something you'd expect in a Neutra house, but the juxtaposition in a Tudor accentuates its beauty in a different way"—and his beloved Mies van der Rohe white-leather lounge chair. "It isn't in a Saarinen lobby," as might be expected, he explains, "it's next to a fireplace and a fur rug."

These personal treasures now coexist with works of his own design—the living room cocktail table, made of reclaimed wood and polished copper; the blackened-metal fireplace screen in the den; and an oval-shaped dining table made to accommodate that narrow space—all resulting in a home that is truly a narrative of its owner's history, travels, acquisitions, talents, and taste.

"This reflects a journey of collecting things, not an attempt to create a particular style," Johanknecht says. "The house gave me a new appreciation of the things I owned, and it's still evolving. In some ways it's like taking an old coat or a favorite sweater and putting patches on the elbows—it just gets better." "

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