



High Life

A new build at the top of the Bird Streets takes open-plan, view-finding design to new heights.

By Andrew Myers | Photography by Ethan Pines

When Mary Ta met Drew Fenton, the two Los Angeles residents soon discovered that they shared a passion for design, décor and architecture. But unlike others who might simply pontificate on the topic, Ta and Fenton have more than the average appreciation for Los Angeles properties.

Ta is the founder and owner of Minotti Los Angeles (which, when it opened in 2004, was the Italian furniture design and manufacturing company's first flagship showroom in the world), and her friend Fenton is a realtor specializing in luxury properties. Recently, the two found themselves

deep in residential real estate convo under the back patio olive trees at the new eatery Laurel Hardware. After hellos and cocktail orders, the talk flew straight uphill, bound for the Bird Streets.

The design-minded duo is speaking specifically about a house very recently finished, one that Ta decided to kit out completely with Minotti, seduced by the idea of seeing how the furniture would look in what she considers the perfect environment—book-matched marble slabs on the exterior and in the bathrooms, white quartz floors on the main level, a quarry of interior gray marble

OPEN HOUSE
Above: Designer and Minotti Los Angeles president Mary Ta. Opposite page: In the open-plan living area, a large-scale piece by Myriam Santos hangs above the fireplace. A pair of Minotti's Williams sofas flank Minotti's Calder coffee table.

walls and Italian hardware throughout. “We’re not a staging company; I said, ‘no’ five times,” Ta says. “But this project really excited me, so finally I said, ‘Yes.’”

What could excite and inspire Ta, long accustomed to the rarified in her private and professional lives? First, there’s the matter of size and shape. She’s talking an 18,000-square-foot contemporary compound spread over more than (drum roll, please) 1 acre of flat-as-a-caviar-topped-blini grounds, the result of more than 100 caissons burrowed to bedrock that essentially doubled the lot size and allowed for the kind of bigness that can never be repeated due to, Fenton explains, a hillside ordinance put into place last year.

There’s also the matter of modern. It’s designed by Laguna Beach-based Paul McClean, and includes a soup-to-nuts reconception of an earlier 8,000-square-foot house owned by Ricardo “Mr. Fantasy Island” Montalban. The property consists of the main house and pool, a guesthouse with pool, and a gym and garage that yells *Ferris Bueller* with its glass-walled sleekness. It’s all rigorously modern, and all connected thematically by McClean’s favorite feature, a seemingly continuous line of water that “links the guesthouse to the main past the garage and then on again to the pool on the view side of the house,” says McClean. “It’s a wonderful unifying element that draws the eye to the view.”

Ah, the view, there’s that too. “When you’re standing on the deck of the master, CONTINUED...

HIGH DRAMA Right: Charles Arnoldi’s “Ballast,” 2007, hangs in the hallway leading to the master bathroom. The Barrique kitchen by Montanari Design Group pairs white lacquered cabinets with Rodolfo Dordoni’s signature handles in stainless steel chrome.





GLOW LIFE
Twenty-foot ceilings in the living room anchor the home's large-scale proportions. Charles Arnold's brightly colored "Tight Lips," 2010, brings a shot of color to the mostly neutral zone.



...CONTINUED looking down, it feels like you're on the deck of a Wally yacht," Ta explains. "Standing in this house is like floating through the city, with views from downtown to Malibu with Catalina on the horizon—it's magical." The property also has superlative views of the hills and canyons, "and we wanted to make sure the house took advantage of that," McClean says.

Additionally, Ta sees the property's aesthetics and indoor-outdoor orientation as an extension of L.A.'s particular vein of modernism and modern architecture. "There's past precedent," she says, naming the Case Study houses, in particular No. 22 by Pierre Koenig, as well as architects John Lautner and Rudolph M. Schindler. "There are Fleetwoods [a brand of electric sliding glass doors that function as walls] throughout the house—a push of a button and you're *plein air*," says Ta, who can't help but point to one illustrative particular: an indoor-outdoor screening room in which one film can play concurrently on two screens, perfectly synced. "The quiet, contemporary storm of L.A.," she says.

Indeed, Ta's level of enthusiasm was such that she didn't stop with the furniture, but in collaboration with her friend, art consultant Hoojung Lee, proceeded to hang the walls with works by a wide array of L.A. artists, among them Charles Arnould, Suzan Woodruff, Laddie John Dill, Myriam Santos and Joe Davidson.

"L.A. is kind of a rogue place among the world's great cities," says Ta. "Not only does it uniquely still have space, as opposed to Hong Kong, London and New York, there's the climate—physical and intellectual—which together form a special environment of freedom that allows you to envision and create." And so she has with this house-cum-compound in the clouds.

As drinks come to a close and the dinner hour approaches, Ta readies to leave while Fenton formulates a final residential thought: "This house will never—can never—be duplicated in this city. It's really a culmination of how people at this level should live. Of how a billionaire should live."

Bingo. ■

SHADES OF GRAY
Above: Minotti's Hamilton-Islands Composition sofa offers seating for a crowd in the screening room. Minotti's Dillbets rug and David Weeks' Torroja floor lamp from Ralph Pucci complete the scene. Opposite page: A dramatic Bubble Chandelier from Wired Lighting hangs above Minotti's Claydon dining table. Minotti's Harvey Horizontal sideboard; Mark Hanauer photography.