

November 2010

TRADITIONAL HOME[®]

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I AM TRADITIONAL

16
spicy
palettes
TO WARM UP
YOUR ROOMS



BY AMY ELBERT
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
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PRODUCED BY
SABINE ROTHMAN

spirito d'italia

CARIN GERARD
LONG KNEW
SHE WOULD BE
AN ARTIST, BUT
IT WAS IN ITALY
THAT SHE FOUND
HER STYLE





Carin Gerard

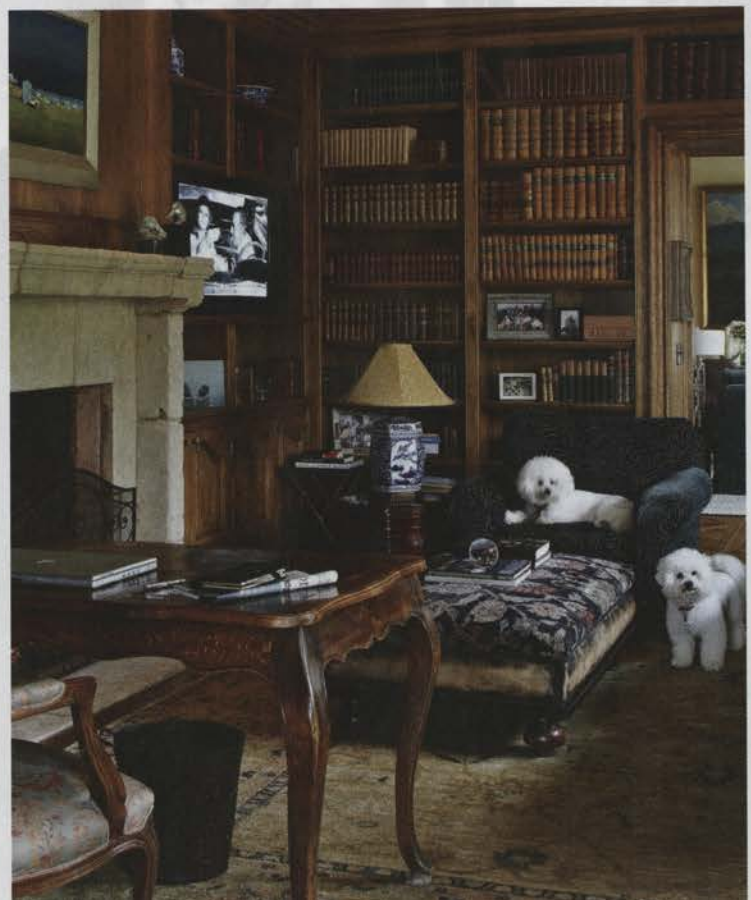
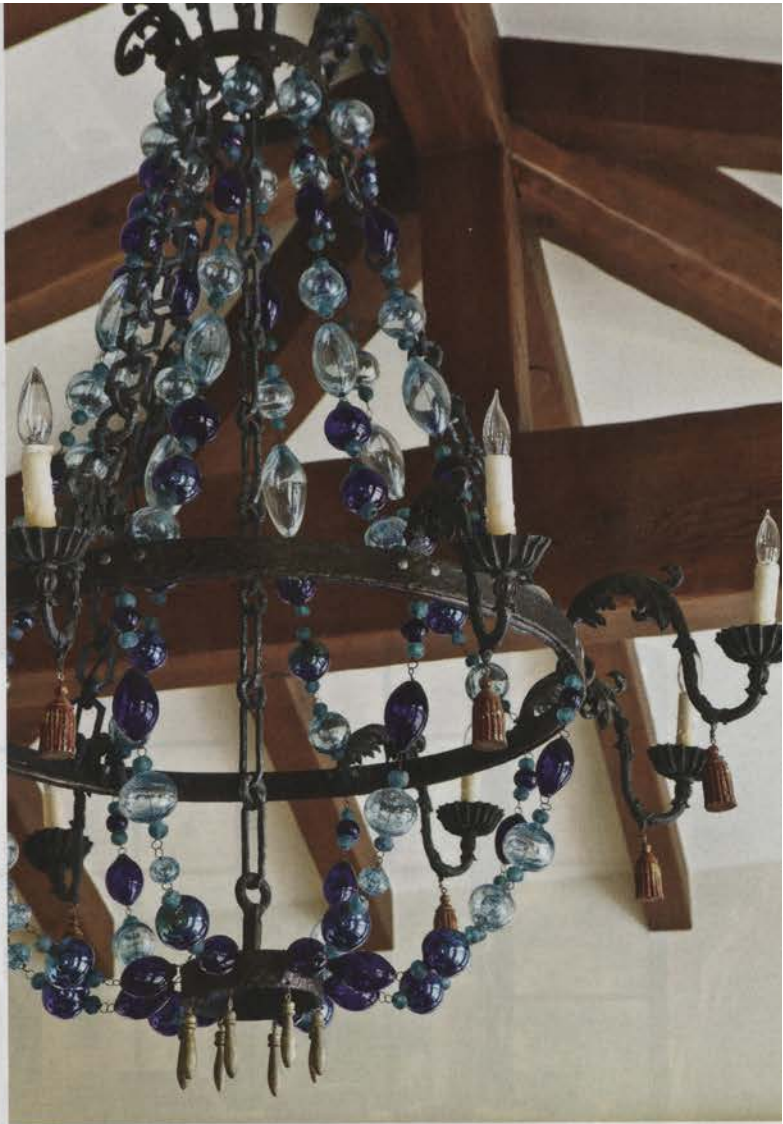
ITALOPHILE, CAPPUCCINO FANATIC,
NEAT NUT, ARTIST WHO BRUSHES
UP FOR GOOD CAUSES

the magical Italian city of Florence transformed Carin Gerard. She arrived as an art student in 1993—a California girl designing pretty pastel fabrics—and returned to the United States two years later as a serious artist, creating large still-life oil paintings. Her love affair with Italy continues, with regular two- and three-week trips each year to study, shop, and be inspired. She fluently speaks Italian and owns a studio in a restored 14th-century Florentine palazzo that once belonged to the Medici family.

Those digs are hard to match in the “young” city of Montecito, California, where Carin lives most of the year with her husband, Tony, a retired businessman. Shortly after they were married in 1999, however, the couple found a Tuscan-style home designed by architect Don Nulty. The plaster exterior and tile roof are reminiscent of Italian buildings, and tall French doors open to views of olive and cypress trees, the Santa Ynez Mountains, and the ocean. “We loved the high ceilings and the volume of the rooms,” Carin says. Plus the home has a guest house across a gravel courtyard with northern light—ideal for an art studio.

Large plaster remnants, salvaged from a ceiling in a French castle, are mounted on the living room wall. **Right:** Hand-blown glass baubles adorn a chandelier that H  l  ne Aumont designed. **Bottom right:** Walnut paneling was lightened and a French antique stone mantel added to the library, a favorite room for the homeowner's two Bichon Frises, Zucca and Baci. **Preceding pages:** Artist Carin Gerard holds Baci in her studio in front of one of her still-in-process paintings of fruit. ■ Carin uses watercolors to record her paintings in a book where she copies her full-size works.

That started with color. Stark white walls were painted a creamy taupe, and Carin put her artistic talents to work finding just the right hue for the exterior. "The homes in Florence have these incredible colors—beautiful ochre and burnt pink terra-cotta," Carin says. "The painters must have tried 20






Left: The previously dark ceiling planks and beams in the dining room were lightened with a driftwood finish, creating a brighter, more inviting space. Aumont covered the red upholstered dining chairs with linen slipcovers that feature frog fasteners on the backs. A custom silk-and-wool rug by Kerry Joyce for Mansour Modern warms the stone floors. **Right:** An artisan resurfaced the previously stuccoed fireplace surround, using crushed stone mixed with pigments. One of Carin's butterfly paintings hangs on the wall. **Below:** Carin relaxes on a high-backed sofa Aumont designed to fit in a niche at one end of the dining room. **Below right:** A master bedroom was added perpendicular to the house, with doors opening to the pool.



samples, but they were either too orange or too strong." Carin went to her studio and mixed oil paints to create a soft yellow ochre that the painters then replicated.

Inside, Aumont replaced insignificant wood fireplace mantels with elegant antique French limestone surrounds, hung chandeliers with hand-blown glass pendants, and added layers of fabrics and textures. Luscious teal-blue silk draperies on arched wrought iron rods soften the living room and complement the L-shaped sapphire blue sofa and chocolate chenille armchairs. Comfort was as important as palette, Aumont says, with Tony





In the master bedroom, silk draperies from the Silk Trading Co. frame views of the swimming pool, the Santa Ynez Mountains, and the ocean. An antique stone fireplace surround is accented by a new custom-made fire screen.

insisting that all sofas be soft and long enough to accommodate his 6-foot-3-inch frame. Aumont designed a 7-foot scalloped-back sofa for a cozy niche in the dining room and covered it in a tight-weave chenille. Library furnishings are also covered in velvets and chenilles, which the dogs enjoy as much as Tony.

A major part of Aumont's job was melding Carin and Tony's households and helping them decide what to keep, reupholster, refinish, or pitch. "I wanted to make the house representative of them, their tastes, and their travels," the designer explains. Antique doors that Tony and Carin found in France were made

into corner cupboards for the dining room. Carin's Deruta Italian pottery is displayed in glass-front kitchen cabinets, her leather-bound books line the shelves in the library, and terracotta pots from Impruneta, Italy, cradle potted flowers.

Tony and Carin often spend lazy Sundays in their courtyard with their dogs, reading *The New York Times* and enjoying a cappuccino. It may not be Florence, but it is a *villa da sogno*—a home of dreams. ■

Interior designer: Hélène Aumont

For more information, see sources on page 146



Top right: When the master bedroom was added, the previous master bath was converted into his-and-her dressing rooms. The walls of Carin's well-planned space are upholstered in blue silk. **Right:** The former master bedroom, which had a corner fireplace, was converted into a luxurious master bath.



art with a heart

After college, California artist Carin Gerard studied at the Charles H. Cecil Studios in Florence, Italy, where she developed her style as a classic realist painter. Her paintings of found objects, oversized fruits, and butterflies are available through the prestigious John Pence Gallery in San Francisco, which shows the work of academically trained realist painters. Carin has also donated her works to charities close to her heart. Recently she had an exhibition in Hiroshima, Japan. While there, she visited the Nisseki Hospital—where she painted a mural with the children being treated for leukemia. "They were all so excited to help create this large mural that was full of bright colors, butterflies, and flowers," Carin says. "The mural hangs on the wall in the hallway of the hospital and the children are so proud of it."

Carin has donated paintings to The Cancer Center of Santa Barbara; the Lucky Brand Foundation, a California-based group for disabled children; and the Sarah House Foundation, an Ohio hospice for low-income people.

