

SECRET  
GARDENS  
OF  
HOLLYWOOD  
AND  
PRIVATE  
OASES IN  
LOS  
ANGELES

ERICA  
LENNARD  
AND  
ADELE  
CYGELMAN



SECRET GARDENS OF  
HOLLYWOOD  
AND PRIVATE OASES IN LOS ANGELES

Erica Lennard  
TEXT BY Adele Cygelman  
INTRODUCTION BY Robert Smaus

UNIVERSE

SECRET GARDENS OF  
HOLLYWOOD  
AND PRIVATE OASES IN LOS ANGELES

ERICA LENNARD AND ADELE CYGELMAN

This book offers a peek into the most beautiful private gardens of Los Angeles, one of the most verdant places on earth. Life here is meant to be lived outdoors and extravagantly, and these gardens reflect the town's larger-than-life personalities, who take pride in their extraordinary garden sanctuaries.

The sunny, warm climate in L.A. allows garden designers to unleash their most creative gardening fantasies, using plants collected from all over the world. The twenty-five gardens in the book illustrate the remarkable range of styles in the area, from Joni Mitchell's whimsical Bel-Air garden retreat, to a garden of rare succulent plants at Jack LaLanne's former residence, to Ted Danson and Mary Steenburgen's Southern-style country hideaway.

Featuring all-new photographs by Erica Lennard, coauthor of the bestselling book *The Art of Doing Nothing*, this escape book is sure to appeal to gardeners and star-gazers alike.

UNIVERSE





## DUANE PHAY

Duane Phay is emphatic about what he does and doesn't like. "I am very picky, very black and white," he says. "I'm not gray and I'm not wishy-washy." When he went house-hunting, he had a precise wish list—the house had to be on a promontory so that he didn't look into anyone else's bedroom, it had to have a view, it had to have a pool, and it had to be reasonably priced. To his surprise, he found it at the very top of a street above Los Angeles, with sweeping views from downtown to the ocean.

Phay is equally emphatic about creating a streamlined environment. While the bones of the house were good and it was beautifully sited, its whitewashed bricks and shag carpet had to go. Phay removed the bricks and red-tile roof, ripped out the brown shag carpet and dark wood paneling, and repainted the mustard ceilings; he brought in purpleheart wood floors and experimented with a stainless steel grid paneling on the walls. Now all is calm and minimalist, and every angle is framed for contrast and drama.

"I steal all my ideas from the movies," admits Phay, who was born and raised in Singapore and London and has spent his life living in different parts of the world, most recently Australia. Now that he has alighted in Los Angeles, he wants his house and garden to be of the city, but not to look like it. To his dismay, all the landscapers he talked to wanted to put in palm trees. "I didn't want the garden to look like I was in L.A.," he says.

Once he found landscape architect Russ Cletta, a partner of top Los Angeles landscaper Jay Griffith, they went to work, guided by Phay's vision. Phay's inspirations are a blur of architecture, movies and fashion: Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye, modern Swedish design, Oscar Niemeyer's buildings in Brazil, Villa Malaparte, John Galliano gowns, and *Mommie Dearest*.

Apart from the pool inside the front gate with a concrete deck, all that existed were hills of ivy. There was no outdoor space. They constructed a

---

From the top of a hill, Duane Phay has juxtaposed a tight symmetry of a sliding door, which came from Disney World's Tomorrow Land, and a tiled water channel with sprawling views of the city.



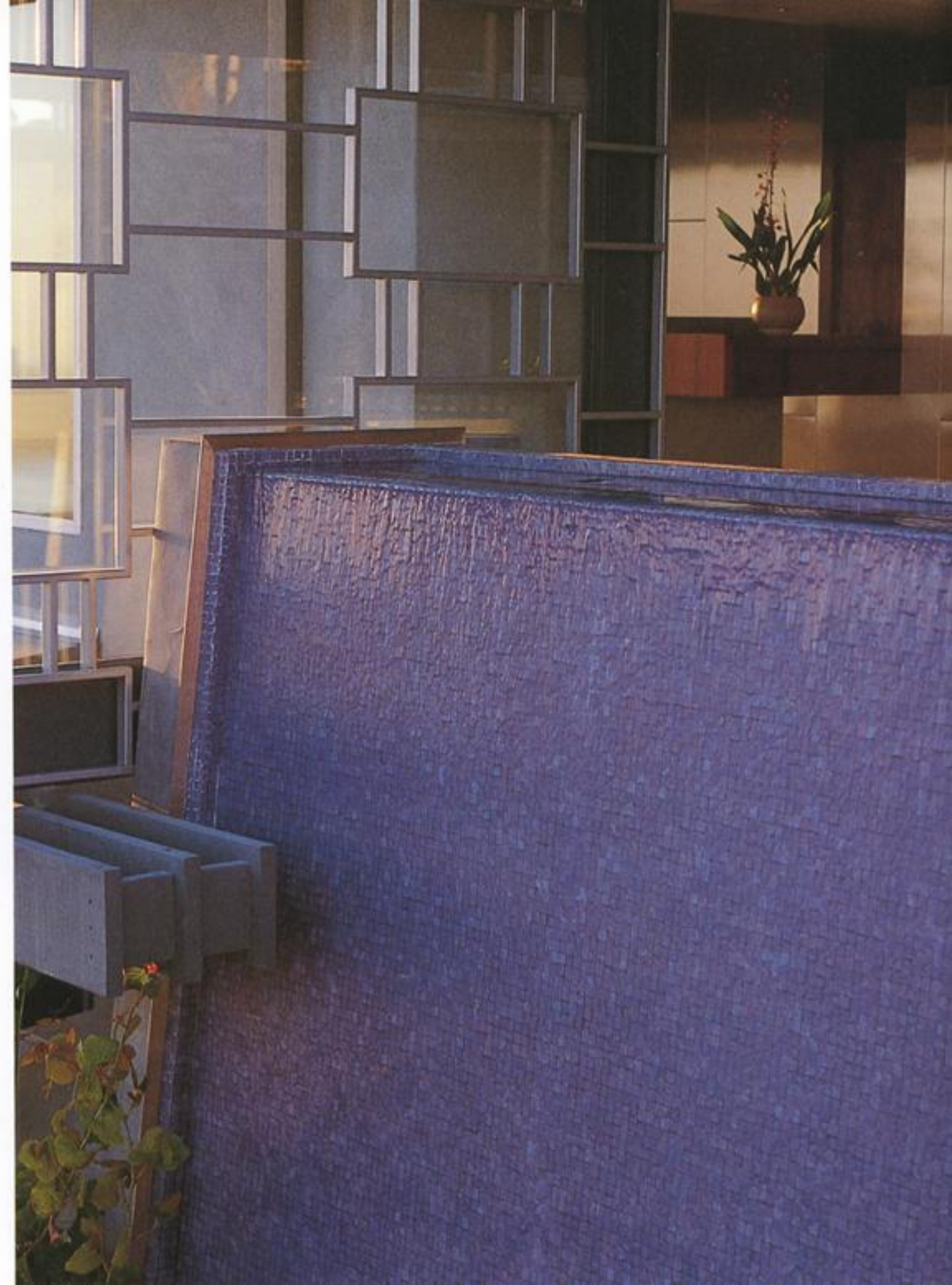
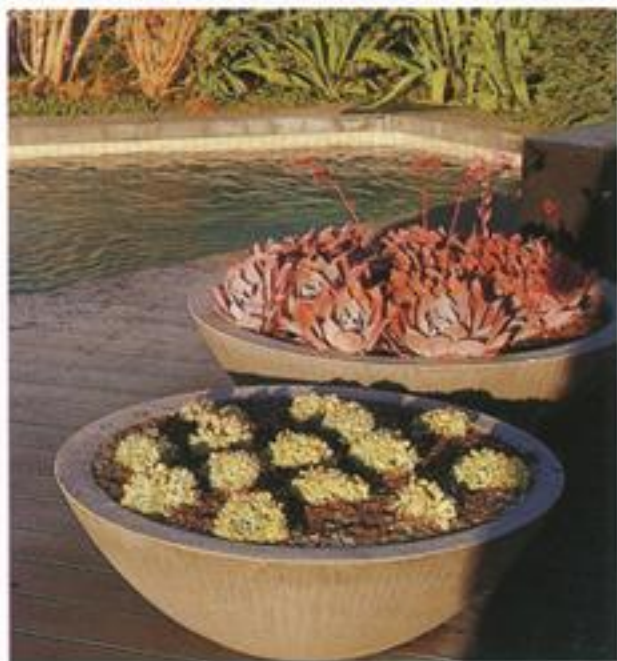
cantilevered outdoor terrace on the slope outside the living room. Ficus trees planted on the hillside had to be hoisted in by crane. Phay keeps the ficus trimmed, forcing them lower and lower, training them to be his "lawn." Water now flows around the house, starting with a spout that trickles into the pool; then a narrow channel by the front door drops a wall of water over the side down into a spa that is lined in purple and blue tile from Brazil.

Every tiny detail was meticulously thought out and handcrafted. The stairs leading down to the deck, for example, are solid steel, but where they cross over the water, they become grates. The handrail is based on a design he saw in Sweden. The sliding Chinese-style modern screens at the front door came from DisneyWorld's Tomorrow Land, and they epitomize the past/future tense of the house.

Phay originally wanted gray, not green, plants in front. Spindly *melaleuca* trees (an Australian native) border the pool. Very few plant materials were used; everything is very pared down. "I hate warmth," Phay says. "I'm not afraid of color, but I wanted everything gray. Like my wardrobe, with its very limited color palette." He imagined the pool as a biblical scene from *The Ten Commandments*, and the plants as reeds. Two round pots were filled with succulents to look like bowls of candy.

From his perch, Phay can see the planes descending into LAX, the Getty Center, oil tankers offshore, and the sun shimmering on the ocean. It's an idealized picture of the city, and the perfect picture frame for an original spirit like Phay.

Phay admits that he steals all his design ideas from movies. **RIGHT:** He and landscape architect Russ Cletta installed a pared-down, gray garden with few plant materials. The impact is in the details: hibiscus in small bowls and round pots filled with succulents to look like bowls of candy. **OPPOSITE:** The water channel overflows and cascades down the side of the house to create a waterfall.







**ABOVE:** Inspired by a trip to Brazil, Phay used purple and blue Brazilian tile for the spa. The steps leading down to the deck go from solid at the top and bottom to grates over the water. **ABOVE RIGHT AND OPPOSITE:** "I hate warmth," says Phay. "I'm not afraid of color, but I wanted everything to be gray." To soften the wall around the front garden and pool, Cietta put in spindly Australian *melaleuca* trees and reeds. "It looks like it all comes from next to a river—like out of *The Ten Commandments*," Phay says.





**ABOVE:** "There are no curves, except for the outside wall," says Phay. "The landscape softens everything." **OPPOSITE:** Phay built the cantilevered deck outside the living room and installed the round fire pit. At dusk, the fire is reflected in the glass panels. "It's all about contrast and drama," Phay says.

