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personality theory

Los Angeles designer Peter Dunham runs against the grain with interiors that, like his own, are full of character

Orientalism rules in the dining room, with a tablecloth in Jaipur in Amber, by Peter Dunham Textiles, and the dramatic arrangement of colors, especially orange and black. The light fixtures, once used in a theater, are from Blackman Cruz, L.A. Vintage leather chairs, George Garma Antiques, L.A. Paint in Liz Cream, Portola Paints. Art, center, by Jennifer Bartlett.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY OBERTO GILI WRITTEN BY CHRISTY HOBART



The living room is built around Dunham's casual pairings, such as an Ernest Boiceau-inspired carpet, which Dunham designed, with the Madagascar Raffia wallpaper by Hinson and an Art Deco-style bisque vase, J F Chen Antiques, L.A. Fabrics by Peter Dunham Textiles, like the Eucalyptus curtains and the Washed Hemp on Dunham's sofa, complement each other. ■ Also in the living room, vintage chairs and ottomans, ca. 1920, are sturdy companions for a marble mantel lined with Chinese Ivory pagodas, a 1950s Adnet lamp, and built-in bookshelves.



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erfection is wasted on designer Peter Dunham. "Personality," he insists, "is much more important." In the living

room of the 1925 Spanish-style house in Los Angeles that he shares with partner Peter Kopelson, one of a pair of 1920s French chairs is poised by the fireplace with its aged leather torn in places. (One or more of the dogs, it seems, is attracted to horsehair stuffing.) "The moment I re-cover it," Dunham says, explaining his reluctance, "it'll look new."

"New" is not Dunham's style. "It kills me to go into showrooms," admits the Englishman, who was raised in Paris and moved to Los Angeles eight years ago after a 15-year-long stopover in New York. And while his design sense isn't necessarily a natural fit in L.A., where the slightest blemish—on body or home—is often grounds for extreme action, his business is flourishing. "People don't come to me asking for a definitive look," he explains, but rather for "warm and eclectic homes. I tune into who they are and how they live, and work from there."

He has done the same—beautifully, if somewhat casually—for Kopelson and himself. "I juggle ten or twelve clients at a time," he says. "At the end of the day, I don't think about our house much. I'm the design equivalent of a poorly shod cobbler." Most of the couple's furniture comes from flea markets, auction houses, and estate sales. Dunham searches out unique pieces for his Hollywood-heavy clientele and ends up keeping some



I've learned to accept it." America, he concedes, "is about practicality, not peeling wallpaper."

And yet Dunham's un-L.A. sensibility rubbed off on Kopelson, who now embraces the charms of an antique dresser with drawers that need an extra tug. (For clients, Dunham has the antiques put in proper working order.) The vintage lighting in the house, including the nineteenth-century French street lamps from New Orleans in the master bedroom, has been rewired, without sacrificing a bit of character.

"When we first got this carpet," Kopelson says of a Dunham-designed rug modeled on the 1920s Ernest Boiceau originals he grew up with in Paris, their West Highland terrier puppy, Boudicca, peed on it. "At first I thought, 'Oh no! Not on this rug!' And then I had to let go." The couple are equally relaxed if a friend spills red wine on a sofa. "That's the least of my worries," Dunham says.

The relaxed atmosphere probably explains why people covet invitations (Cont. on page 121)

A 1920s Spanish table allows for a spacious summer spread in the garden. Just beyond is the guesthouse and pool room. Friends gather on a garden path near the pool with dogs Buster, Jazz, and Bella. In the entry, a Papua sisal rug in Natural from Patterson, Flynn & Martin is layered with a cowhide rug from eBay, an olive-wood table, ca. 1960, and a gessoed metal chandelier. Plates by Konstantin Kakanias and a lampshade in a vintage Indian fabric add pop and dimension. The sofa is upholstered in Bay Stripe in Sage 1019/02, by Chelsea Editions.



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of his finds. For a while, anyway. "Peter doesn't get attached to things," Kopelson says, noting that he frequently returns home from his work as a dermatologist to find that things have gone missing.

Even though chairs are removed and sofas are swapped out, Dunham still thinks that the house is "definitely too full of stuff." And yet both men find the clutter comforting. Dog beds and a television (not a plasma, mind you) sit in plain sight; family photos—some framed, some not—are stuck here and there along the bookshelves; a jumble of novels teeters on the bedside table. It's all lived-in, relaxed, personal—and incredibly chic.

For Kopelson it's a style he had to get used to. Having grown up in Beverly Hills the son of a successful movie producer, he thought rooms were supposed to be large, furniture ample, and decor just so. "I helped Peter understand that in L.A., people aren't especially interested in what's old and ripped up and beautiful to look at," Kopelson says. "They want things to work." And Dunham adds, "They want a TV in every room. Ugh. But



The function of the various rooms is deliberately fluid. The foyer often becomes a place for dinners served on the plates by artist Konstantin Kakanias that line the wall