

MARY ENGELBREIT'S

HOME COMPANION

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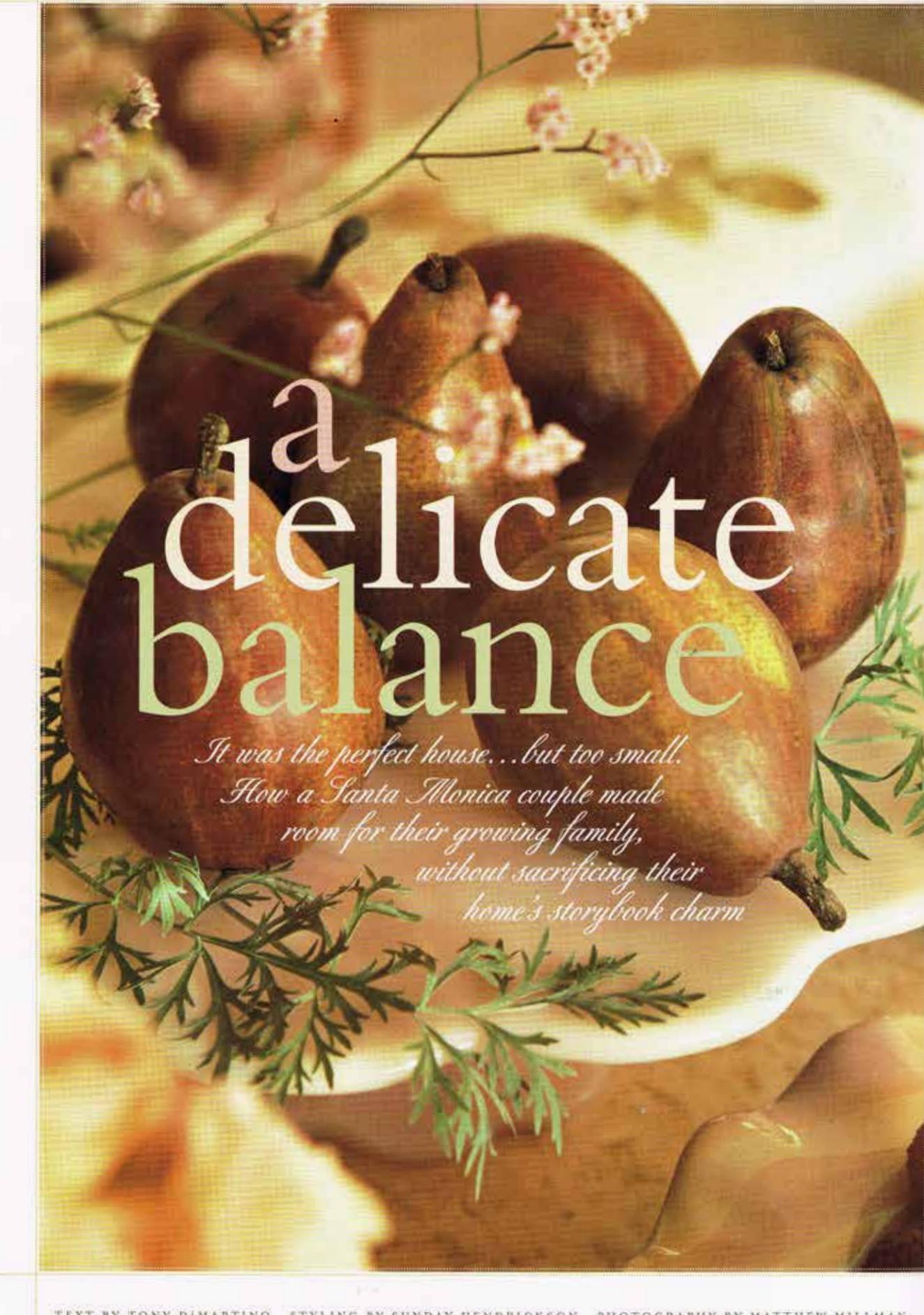
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a delicate balance

*It was the perfect house...but too small.
How a Santa Monica couple made
room for their growing family,
without sacrificing their
home's storybook charm*



In the family room, splashy birdbath drawings provide textural contrast to oil paintings on the opposite wall (see page 82). "I like to bring the garden inside." Gretchen bought the chipped walnut buffet from her cousin. "It was wrong for her, but right for us." The curvy chair looks like a fancy antique, but it's a flea-market find painted white and reupholstered.



Gretchen Dinapoli was chasing after her toddler son when she realized her house was shrinking.

"There wasn't much room to run around," she recalls. "Christopher was almost 2, our daughter Madison was about 4, and we hoped to have one more child. Suddenly, the place seemed so small—two bedrooms, 1,800 square feet. We liked our street, and we were in a good school district, but we were outgrowing our dream house."

So the Dinapolis turned to Ward Jewell, who'd remodeled other houses in their Santa Monica neighborhood. "We didn't want to sacrifice character for size," the architect explains. "Our goal was to make big changes on a small scale, so we could keep that English Country charm."

It took a year and a half to double the structure's square footage by adding eight rooms, including two bedrooms, a family room, and three baths.

"We also tore down the detached garage and built a new one onto the house, gaining eight precious feet of garden space," Gretchen says.

The dining room, enlarged during the expansion, is now Gretchen's favorite place. It's a vibrant mix of good French antiques (like the 1800s mirror and marble-topped patisserie table) and choice new pieces. "I wanted antique chairs and actually brought some home, but they were too fragile and tearoomish—I couldn't see my kids sitting in them."

Gretchen and Justin, **TOP LEFT**, snuggle on an antique settee redone in contemporary fabric. Framed chalk drawings, by artist Ellen Bass, were inspired by the bedroom's toile headboard and dust ruffle (page 89). **LEFT**: The eclectic dining room. **TOP RIGHT**: In the foyer, an antique French mirror, a gift from Gretchen's parents, opens up the entry area. **OPPOSITE**: A chandelier in the kitchen? Why not! "I like to sanctify small spaces." Gretchen opted for a handmade maple pedestal table instead of an island. "It's cozier." The painted, rush-seated chairs are French.







make room for roses

In the family room, **ABOVE**, leather chairs from Crate & Barrel are right at home atop a creamy Aubousson carpet. The marble-topped, pine-based coffee table is a \$100 hand-me-down from her cousin. Floral paintings—some scavenged from flea markets, others commissioned from local artists—bloom over the mantel. Gretchen adores flowers and often designs arrangements for friends. **RIGHT**: "Roses add grace and subtle color to any room." A pair of angelic silver candlesticks were a 10th anniversary present from Gretchen's parents.





Gretchen's natural flair for decorating, honed during an apprenticeship with Kathryn Ireland, shines in every room.

"I didn't have a plan—it was an intuitive, hit-or-miss process," she admits. "I'd bring stuff home on a trial basis and live with it awhile to see if it worked. My only rule was, I didn't keep anything unless we loved it."

Sounds like a relaxed approach, but there was a method to her anything-goes madness that saved a lot of time, energy, and money. "I started with foundation pieces—rugs and window treatments—in creamy neutrals, then built from there, adding color with paintings and fabric."

What evolved is a harmonious blend of styles and moods. It wasn't easy to achieve, but Gretchen makes it look effortless.

"It's all a matter of texture and proportion," she advises. "I try to balance oil paintings with drawings, metal with wood, good antiques with hand-me-downs and yard-sale stuff, low pieces like tables and buffets with breakfronts."

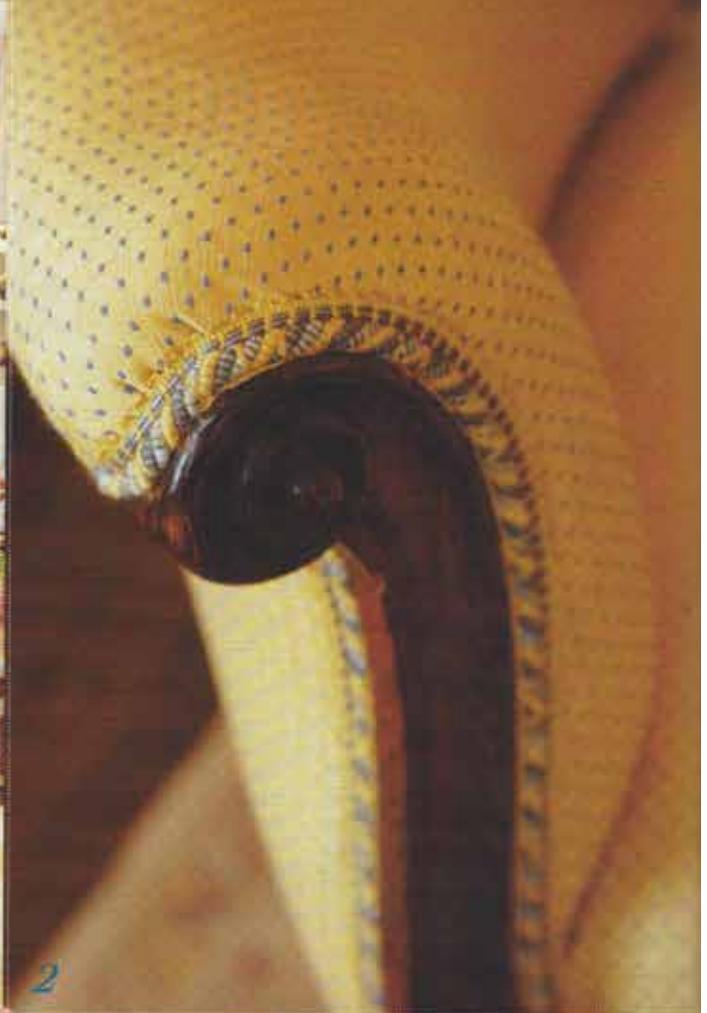
She believes in investing even the smallest area with big style. "It's tempting to skip over small spaces or treat them as an afterthought. Instead, I emphasize them by creating displays or grouping striking accessories. Even if there's barely enough room to turn around, add a bronze cherub or a vase of fresh flowers. That's my philosophy."



INSET: Future grid great Justin Dinapoli.

BELOW: "We called it 'our petite project'," says architect Ward Jewell about the Dinapoli home. He retained the structure's character and small scale while doubling the space.







"Our home is full of things we love. Matthew and I enjoy treasure hunting, and the kids like to watch and eat ice cream cones."

RIGHT: A pair of 19th-century iron and crystal sconces from Italy "really make the room," Gretchen says. The French oil painting, a 1940s rendering of the Arc de Triomphe, was a gift from Matthew. "I threatened to make him sleep on the couch for two weeks if he didn't get it for me!" she admits with a laugh.

BOTTOM RIGHT: The dynamic Dinapolis are (left to right) Madison, 11; Christopher, 9; Gretchen; Justin, 2; and Matthew, a real estate investor.



spellbinding seating

"In a party-ready house, you can't have too many chairs."

OPPOSITE: 1 Have a seat on this French antique spruced up with fabric by Old World Weavers. The 1860s English secretary still has students' initials carved on top. **2** French chairs are low enough to fit around the living room coffee table (see ABOVE). "The upholstery is a bit ragged, but I love the gray-blue dots against the sunny yellow." **3** Inspired by a similar treatment in a friend's house, she designed this bow-dacious dining room cushion herself, using three fabrics from Cowtan & Tout. "I tried it first with antique fabric, but with three messy kids—forget it!" **4** The garden chairs were a garage-sale find. "They came with vinyl seat cushions, but I had skirted slipcovers made from ordinary fabric. Most outdoor fabrics are too stiff for the look I like."

