





NOUVEAU NICHE

Who says trad can't marry mod? For one Orange County redo, grand gets its groove on with big color, bold lines and a whole lot of fun

BY NATHAN SWAIN | PHOTOGRAPHY BY KARYN MILLET

When Ann and Eric Smyth, SoCal natives and residents of Newport Beach for more than 20 years, realized their three teenage sons and growing menagerie of adopted pets were outgrowing their one-story ranch, they decided it was time to move. But leaving behind their ultra kid friendly neighborhood and Beaver Cleaver-caliber neighbors was not an option. And then one day, the other ranch house with the big magnolia tree on the cul-de-sac a few streets over went on the market. So the Smyths snapped it up, even though they knew they were going to tear it down.

For some, the thought of an Orange County rebuild may conjure images of too-large plaster palaces populated by equally anatomically unbalanced trophy wives thanks to the lenses of a certain "reality" TV show. But, luckily, this is not the reality of Ann and Eric, for whom new does not equal nouveau. They wanted modernized traditional—something stylish, casual and comfortable, where they could entertain without having to limit their kids' free reign. Eric tapped into his resources as a commercial and industrial real estate manager to find the perfect person—incidentally, an old classmate of Ann's from Estancia High—to build their vision from the ground up: designer Sheldon Harte.

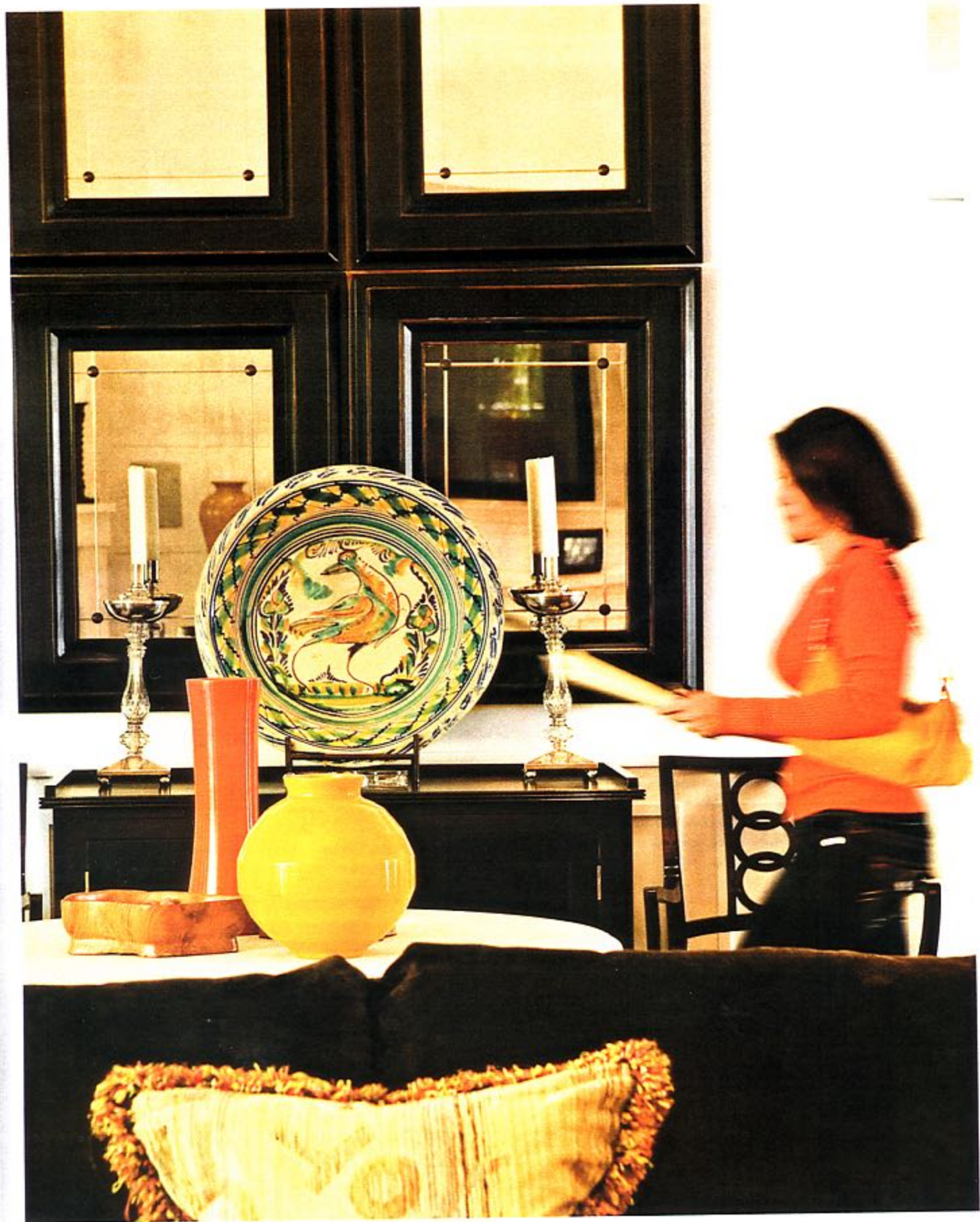
The Laguna Beach-based Harte, who founded his interior design and architecture firm Harte Brownlee & Associates 27 years ago, didn't plan on a design career initially. "I either wanted to own a Cadillac dealership or be a gentleman haberdasher," says Harte, who joined the Cannell and Chaffin furniture empire after business school at 22. Partially fueled by a style-centric childhood induced by his fashion designer mother and the Cliff May house she filled with antiques, Harte decided to get his design license and venture out on his own. Impressed with the designer's 200-plus completed projects and his reputation for blending beauty and comfort, the Smyths and Harte began the more than two-year process of planning and building the 5,000-square-foot, five-bedroom, six-and-a-half-bath dwelling.

Up went a two-story traditional with overlapped siding, shutters and a deep green front door. Keeping in mind Ann's insistence on not having a living room, the house finds its center with a spacious great room meant for gathering to read, chat or just lounge. Ann also opted for bright colors and geometric patterns rather than florals; more silver than gold, as is evident in the steel and nickel fixtures. Harte suggested the interior and exterior décor be tied together with citrus colors—orange, lime and yellow anchored by a neutral dark brown—and crisp white walls, a theme that is carried throughout the house. **CONTINUED...**

In the dining room, bold-patterned Summer Square drapes by Victoria Hagan Home keep things quietly cutting-edge. A Paul Ferrante custom light fixture hangs above A. Rudin's Jules table in walnut.

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Above: Owner Ann Smyth breezes by her Harte Brownlee & Associates designed sofa with espresso linen-velvet cushions and pillow done in Clarence House's Velours Moderne fabric. Mirrors by Milling Road. Opposite: Custom chairs by Harte Brownlee & Associates are covered in Galbraith & Paul Birch fabric.



Above: Kingsley-Bates' teak Nantucket deep-seating love seat in Chella's exterior Montecatini chenille fabric with Donghia pillows in Dahu. A vintage sugar cane press gets its second act as a coffee table. **Right:** Ammonoites from Agadir. **Opposite:** Natural grass woven shades by Conrad keep things elegant and laid back. The Fortuny bench features white shell-trimmed pillows in Velours Madeleine from Samuel & Sons. Harte Brownlee & Associates' custom-made the Tibetan wool striped rug.

...CONTINUED from the tangerine-print custom chairs he had made for the great room to the round lime-green daybed by the pool. Craftsmanship was another key element (and due to Harte's experience with interior architecture, another key reason he was brought on board) for Eric, who wanted custom-made, not-off-the-shelf simplicity. Thus, the kitchen's Shaker-inspired wainscoting was given a modern slant through Harte's decision to change the elevation of the moldings and install custom cabinetry. Plus, nearly all the lighting fixtures in the house were custom designed by Harte and Paul Ferrante, including a gigantic geometric steel chandelier that took 10 hours to hang in the hall.

Finding the balance between sophistication and livability, the Smyths use every room. "We just love how open and airy it is, how we can always see who's coming and going," says Ann, who has a constant trail of neighborhood kids running through the house. So why don't we see this side of the OC on TV? Perhaps it's because the reality is just a little too real to make a hit show. ■



