

The Designer

Fall 2013

2013 International Landscape Design Award Winners

2013 Landscape Designer of the Year
Paul Connolly, APLD



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Residential Merit Award

Silver Lake Jewel, Silver Lake, California

Laura Morton, APLD

Laura Morton Design, Hollywood, California



The apartments overlook a large, bare, flat backyard in USDA Zone 10b with poor drainage and elevation lower than the street. There was an obsolete side drive, since the garage had been transformed into a studio, and the front yard was composed of old turf.

The clients are a well-travelled couple (banker and spiritual healer wife) who love African art and color. He wanted privacy, a place to lounge, a fire pit and outdoor shower. She required a gathering space for council circles, meditation and healing arts. They asked for new plantings to provide shade; roses and fruit trees, and open areas where the wife could grow sacred herbs for her shamanic practice. Both wanted water features to cool the space.

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The main design intent was to extend interior living spaces outdoors, provide privacy by drawing the focus inward, and pad the perimeter with plants. Grade changes and plant materials were to add dimension and softly separate spaces for gathering, dining, lounging, bathing, gardening and meditation. Sacred geometry and tribal motifs were added to symbolically surround the property in a protective cocoon.

The design uses a curvilinear approach to organize the new elements. It winds like a snake (an auspicious symbol) down the new side-drive garden, through an eight-pointed star fountain, past the shaded dining area, around the tree, and along the curved seating area with "full moon" gas fire pit, ending at the outdoor shower.

The strategic siting of three large trees creates privacy and shade from different views. A forged iron "umbrella" supports a bougainvillea that shades a casual dining set. Moroccan lanterns are suspended at the tip of its ribs to create ambiance.

The back wall of the curved seating area defines an upper garden with a black and white pebbled meditation circle. A black foliage hedge adds additional privacy and mystery. Green upholstery echoes the seasonal grasses that pop up after the rains. Black lava rock was used in the moon fire pit; black marbles in the star-shaped fountain.



Sapphire blue walls, espaliered purple bougainvillea and red roses form a lush tapestry backdrop. Thank you, Yves St. Laurent! Ornamental grasses add movement and softness against a floor of urbanite and permeable decomposed granite that is seeded annually with California wildflowers.

The master bedroom terrace becomes an outdoor boudoir with vintage bathtub. Colorful Fez tiles pattern a half wall against the house and the new half pillars are covered with reed mats, African style. Cotton curtains frame views of a fragrant garden of white flowers.

Rainwater is managed on site, directed to infiltration areas and rain gardens. A sump pump in the back empties into the front yard bioswale. There is drip irrigation throughout. Recycled elements include "urbanite" paving and pathways; refinished bathtub; powder-coated old metal dining set; shelves from old wood doors and thrift shop mirrors. Native plantings provide forage and habitat. No chemicals or pesticides here...only love, mulch and magic.

The designer created a master plan for the property, including low-voltage lighting and provided oversight of aesthetic intent during construction.