

# interiors







## A SINGLE MAN

DESIGNER: GARY HUTTON

TEXT: MICHAEL ROURKE

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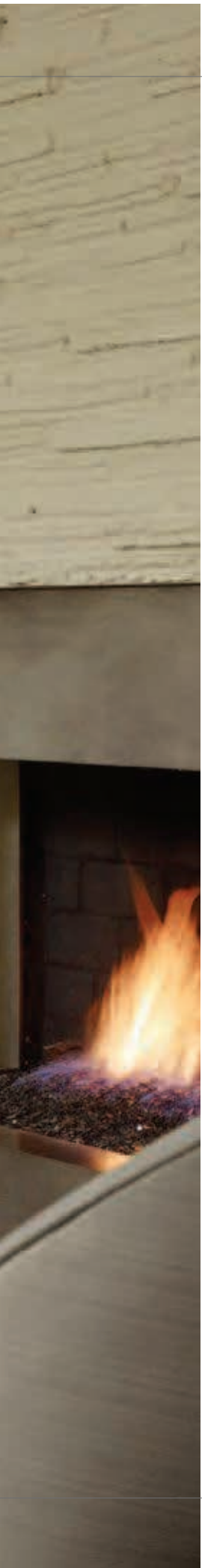
SINCE THE 1920S, THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS HAVE served as a kind of “idea lab” for Los Angeles design. Architects like Frank Lloyd Wright, Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra explored new ideas for modern living in the secluded, rustic canyons located just minutes from the city’s vast urban sprawl. Even the modest residential developments that cropped up in the hills throughout the 1950s and 1960s embraced a modern aesthetic that seemed to embody the excitement and promise of postwar American life.

Thomas Lavin, who opened his to-the-trade design showroom in Los Angeles in 2000, had always been drawn to the Hollywood Hills, and when he came across a midcentury house there a few years ago, he decided to make the move. “The neighborhood broke ground in 1958, the year my house was built, and was developed through the sixties,” he says. “It’s an enclave of modernism. I also love the fact that it’s remarkably quiet: You can hear owls at night and hawks during the day.”

One of the reasons that Lavin was attracted to the 2,200-square-foot house was the layout and the possibility for indoor/outdoor living. “It’s a mostly open floor plan, with the bedrooms, bathrooms and den on one side,” he notes. “I entertain often, and with the French doors open, I can fit 200 people here comfortably. When I’m home alone, though, it becomes my refuge.”

Lavin had worked with San Francisco designer Gary Hutton, a longtime friend, on his previous house, and he asked Hutton to help him with the new property. “Gary gets into his clients’ heads and sees them in a complete and complex way,” says Lavin. “He understands me in a way that I sometimes don’t even understand myself. Gary has taught me about color, proportion and mixing styles. He inspires me through his vision of what a house can be.”























**H**UTTON AND ARCHITECT NOEL WILLIAMS, WHO HAD ALSO collaborated on Lavin's previous house, went to work. "The goal was to create a casual, sophisticated environment that gave a nod both to the midcentury modern bones of the house and to the Hollywood glamour of the Billy Haines era," Hutton explains. "To me, Thomas is a very glamorous character, and giving him that kind of stage on which to live his life was a serious consideration."

While the original floor plan worked well, the team took the house down virtually to its studs, installing concrete floors, adding windows and French doors, removing walls and designing a new kitchen and baths. "The main challenges in a remodel are the discoveries of the unknown," says Hutton. "Every remodel has them. You open up a wall, discover X, then have to reconsider the direction the project is heading. It's always best to listen to the architecture and what it's trying to say."

The living room was conceived as an intimate, slightly formal space. "The Thomas lounge chairs were designed by Gary and named in my honor," says Lavin. "Gary also chose the Billy Haines sofa in front of the fireplace, and we used his Swarovski Facet bronze drink tables, which add glamour to any room." Drywall was removed to reveal the fireplace's original textured brick, which was painted white. Swedish end tables from the 1930s, a silvery fox rug and porcelain lamps once owned by Lavin's grandmother add an exotic Hollywood touch. A shimmery Ramona Fixture by Fuse Lighting (named after showroom vice-president Ramona Drost) adds drama to the dining room, where chairs by Madeline Stuart surround a Gulassa table. "Madeline's Bedford chair is my favorite dining chair," says Lavin. "It's tall, and the proportions work well with my fifteen-foot ceilings."

The lounge area is a casual space with banquette seating, a Chista coffee table and a Ted Boerner side table. Two circa 1970 lithographs by Joe Goode testify to Lavin's interest in contemporary art. "Gary chose the midcentury Flos light fixture, which looks very clubby and hip but isn't overbearing," he notes. Hutton adds, "I was inspired by Tom Ford's movie *A Single Man* and how beautifully it captured a mood, so we used elements that reinforced that."

The design of the master bedroom began with a sexy silver-backed grass-cloth wallcovering from Romo, which set the tone for the room. "The Antoine Proulx bed is really generous, and the headboard integrates nightstands in an elegant way," says Hutton. "Of course, we had to add lots of closet space, as Thomas's wardrobe is legendary!" Joan Weissman collaborated with Hutton on the bedroom's silk rug ("My favorite item in the entire house!" says Lavin).

A richly patterned marble from Artistic Tile carries the mood of the bedroom into the minimalist master bath, which was opened up to views of the garden. The deep soaking tub is fitted with a Dornbracht waterfall spout, "a wonderful feature that also fills this house with the sound of splashing water when the doors are open," Hutton notes.

In some ways, Thomas Lavin's house functions as an intimate showcase for contemporary California design. "There are so many good designers working here right now, and Thomas represents so many of them," Hutton says. "There's a lovely respect for each other in Thomas's posse. Respecting the past while looking forward is what his place is really about. It's optimistic in a way that's kind of like the fifties and sixties were." ■ Gary Hutton, 415 626 2180 [garyhuttondesign.com](http://garyhuttondesign.com); Thomas Lavin, 310 278 2456, [thomaslavin.com](http://thomaslavin.com)