



The 5-year-old front landscape for this West L. A. Spanish-style bungalow was designed by Nicholas Walker and Barry Campion, opposite, and is made up mostly of California native plants, including *artemisia*, *Salvia clevelandii*, native buckwheat and verbena.



## different worlds

A n Eclectic Guest House and Its Exotic Jungle Sprout Up in a Traditional California Setting

by susan heeger

**a** love for California native plants inspired the garden in front of this West L.A. bungalow, but what you can't see from the street is where the leafy passion has led.

Five years ago, Barry Campion and Nicholas Walker of CampionWalker Garden Design helped the owner choose sages, heucheras, artemisias and ceanothus to create her street-side chaparral garden. Later, when she had a guest house

photographed by dominique vorillon

built into a hillside below, they crafted a rooftop terrace for it, extending their palette to include such dryland exotics as Ecuadorean polygonum, Australian flax and South African succulents. But the dreamy part was still to come: The owner, an avid traveler whose taste for plants, and knowledge of them, grew faster than her garden, also yearned for some tropicals, though their broad leaves and

The guest house, by Lubowicki/Lanier Architects, is tucked into the sloping lot behind the bungalow as a two-part structure: the living room, made of steel-framed wood and glass with copper



cladding, and the grass-roofed bedroom of stuccoed concrete. "They're the same size," says Lanier. "We were trying to establish a relationship between the two similar things and have them also express dissimilarities. One is an exposed, almost outdoor space, the other is nestled into the landscape."



From left: The architects wanted the guest house living room, with its glass walls, clerestory windows and beamed ceiling, to feel like an old barn "where you could see through the cracks." Glass walls frame



a sliver of jungle: bamboo, palms, taro, ligularia, 'Gold Band' pampas grass and lush banana trees. Below the guest house, against a backdrop of existing bamboo, Campion and Walker created an island planting of king palms, a Madagascar palm, ligularias, heliconias and aeoniums. *Russelia equisetiformis* grows in stepped planters between the buildings.



#### Campion and Walker's Garden Inspirations:

- The film "Zabriskie Point," with its California desert setting.
- "The Sheltering Sky," Paul Bowles' novel of expatriate life amid a strange and evocative landscape.
- The late L.A. assemblage artist H.C. Westerman, who had a distinctive, eccentric way of putting disparate elements together into box-style installations.
- Music from "The Buena Vista Social Club" album produced by Ry Cooder, with its flavor of moody, jungle-edged Havana, Cuba.

thirsty nature were incompatible with the existing flora.

Luckily, in building the guest house, a contemporary wood, metal and concrete design by Lubowicki/Lanier Architects, she had already established the theme of compartmentalized eclecticism. Tucked as it is into the sloping lot, the new two-part structure- half copper-clad, half stucco- is invisible to the house above. So is the landscape it overlooks, a piece of ground sliced by a stream and a stand of bamboo that evokes jungle. "The house and guest house coexist on the same land in separate worlds," explains archi-

tect Susan Lanier: "One faces the public realm, one seems buried in a garden that erupts out of it and around it."

Like a mussed toupee, dwarf pampas grass sprouts from part of its roof, while sprays of grass-like russelia fill stepped planters around it. Inside,, enormous plate-glass windows frame a view of palms and other tropical greens against feathery bamboo, and skylights let in rustling treetops. Outside, a swath of broken concrete paving divides the growth, bringing order to the forest and forging a path that meanders down, eventually, to the stream.







From left: Inspiration for the bedroom, say the architects, came from Bruce Nauman's paintings of whales. "You feel as if you're sleeping under an elevated belly," says Lanier. Above the guest house, a terrace with drought-tolerant Mediterranean plants and cacti from the owner's collection leads to the bedroom roof garden, where dwarf pamas grass, kanagaroo paws, flax, Spanish lavender and biden flourish. A pygmy date palm, *Strelitzia juncea*, taro and ivy geraniums grow around a stacked concrete wall outside the



guest-house bedroom. At the bottom, a pond holds duckweed and miniature cattails.

The same concrete which covers the roof terrace and appears again near the house was a garden motif with which Campion and Walker knit their pieces together. "There's a fine line," says Campion, "between an interesting plant mix and a hodgepodge. But with the help of a strong, controlling edge and repetitive patterns, you can create a whole, and give the eye places to rest."

To keep the concrete from getting the upper hand, grasses and ground covers were planted between the paving, suggesting civilization gone gently to seed. The designers also introduced potted plants, especially on the roof terrace, where they

add stylish touches to seating spots and showcase the owner's succulent collection.

These spiky specimens, which she's had for years, represent an early phase of her horticultural quest. More recently, she has developed a yen for California bog plants, which Campion and Walker have scattered beside the creek, after building stairs and terraces to clear the way. Instead of wild berry canes that once choked and obscured the stream, native juncus grass now waves on its banks. Which brings the garden full circle, back to its California roots.