

HAPPY ENDING



NANCY MEYERS HEADS OUT TO THE GARDEN. LANDSCAPE DESIGN BY MIA LEHRER OF STUDIO-MLA. OPPOSITE LUSH, MATURE PLANTINGS CREATE A WELCOMING ENTRANCE.

HAIR BY CHRIS McMILLAN FOR SOLO ARTISTS; MAKEUP BY KATE LEE FOR THE WALL GROUP

Having undergone a refresh at the hands of designer *Mark D. Sikes*, the longtime L.A. home of beloved filmmaker *Nancy Meyers* is ready for its close-up

TEXT BY CATHERINE HONG PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMY NEUNSINGER



LEFT MEYERS IN HER HOME OFFICE. FLOWERS HERE AND THROUGHOUT BY JOSEPH FREE. RIGHT THE LIVING ROOM SOFAS WEAR A DE LE CUONA LINEN. THE PAIR OF MORRIS CHAIRS IS BY LUCCA STUDIO, THE COCKTAIL TABLE IS FROM DÉMIURGE NEW YORK, AND THE MIRROR IS FROM BLACKMAN CRUZ.



if

the story of writer-director-producer Nancy Meyers and her house were a Hollywood movie, it would most certainly be what the late philosopher Stanley Cavell famously termed a “comedy of remarriage.” Just like *His Girl Friday*, *The Philadelphia Story*, and *The Awful Truth*—three of the best-known examples of the genre from the 1930s and ’40s—this feature would begin at the couple’s breakup, trace the rekindling of their sparky romance, and end with their delightful reunion. In this case, however, our heroine’s romantic partner is not Cary Grant. It is her Provençal-style house in Los Angeles.

Sixteen years ago Meyers, the creative powerhouse behind *Something’s Gotta Give*, *The Holiday*, and *It’s Complicated*, decided that things were over

between herself and her five-bedroom dream home. For several years, the house had been a beloved refuge. But when daughter Annie went off to college, the house—which Meyers had started building when she was married to the girls’ father, director Charles Shyer—seemed much too big for just her and younger daughter Hallie. “After many years of enjoying this house, I decided I should move to a smaller one,” she says, her eyes twinkling behind horn-rimmed glasses.

Dressed in a crisp white blouse, she’s seated in the home office, where she’s conducted most of her pandemic-era Zoom interviews, a long wall of white-painted bookcases crammed with books and framed family photos behind her. “So I bought the house next door and hired architect Howard Backen to build me a new one,” she continues. That one was going to be much more modestly sized and modern, conceived around indoor-outdoor living. But since

it was going to take a couple of years, “I thought to myself, I’ll just change things up here in the meantime,” she recalls. “Basically, if something was dark—like my dining room table—I made it light, and if it was light, I made it dark.” Pause. Cut to our heroine’s light-bulb moment, when she realizes that she might be making a big mistake. “I fell back in love with my house!” she says with a laugh. She abandoned the plan, sold the place next door, and has stayed happily ensconced here—with some recent “freshening up,” which we’ll get to in a moment—ever since.

Meyers’s talent for conjuring movie homes that audiences covet for themselves has been evident since 1991’s *Father of the Bride*, which she cowrote. That film (starring Steve Martin) featured a posh white Colonial that seems an early cinematic testament to the low-key good taste that Meyers’s own movies would come to embody. With each film since,

Meyers has masterminded one mouthwatering interior after another. Who has watched *Something’s Gotta Give* and not swooned over the Diane Keaton character’s Hamptons living room, with its acreage of inviting white sofas? Or the elegantly rustic kitchen in *It’s Complicated*? People’s obsession with her film interiors, Meyers has said, is so passionate that she fears it sometimes “overshadows” the films themselves. Still, her attention to every chair, lamp, and book on set remains unwavering: “Characters’ homes convey so much about the people who live there,” she says. (Having just inked a deal with Netflix to write, direct, and produce a new ensemble comedy, the director is surely about to envision new spaces that will set fans’ hearts ablaze.)

At any rate, she can’t resist her penchant for beauty, a trait she traces back to her late mother, Patricia, who regularly dragged young Nancy and her sister to



“Nothing was a complete departure from what was there before,” Sikes notes. “What you see here is really Nancy’s personal style.”

PAUL FERRANTE LANTERNS HANG ABOVE AN ARRAY OF SUTHERLAND FURNITURE PIECES IN THE POOLHOUSE, WHICH WAS DESIGNED BY ARCHITECT LOREN KROEGER. THE LANDSCAPING IN THIS AREA WAS DONE BY DEBORAH NEVINS & ASSOC. POOLSIDE, RH UMBRELLAS SHADE SUTHERLAND FURNITURE CHAISE LONGUES.

antiques fairs. “We would drive out to the country outside of where we lived in Philadelphia and she’d load up the trunk,” she says fondly. “She was always rearranging furniture or refinishing something in the garage. She had lovely taste.” Meyers seems to have passed the decorating genes to Annie and Hallie. (It’s hardly a coincidence that Hallie, also a director, made the film *Home Again*, starring Reese Witherspoon as an interior designer, which Meyers herself produced.) “I mean, it’s fun,” she says. “My girls and I are on a group chat every day, and often it’s ‘Look at this thing I found on eBay.’”

“INTENSE!” IS HOW Los Angeles–based interior designer Mark D. Sikes describes Meyers’s focus on details. Having collaborated with the director on her home over the past eight years (in fact, she wrote the introduction to his first book, *Beautiful*), he’s come to know her well. “You hear the stories about how as a director she’ll do, like, 50 takes to get just the right one?” he says, chuckling. “Just apply that to her design process.”

Meyers first met Sikes by chance, when she was visiting home-design showrooms on La Cienega Boulevard with Annie. Meyers had agreed to help her daughter decorate her new house and was feeling, as she puts it, a bit “panicked.” They saw a young man setting up a display in a store window who was using “a lot of the same fabrics we had just picked out,” recalls Meyers. (It was during L.A.’s annual Legends of La Cienega event, when interior designers create artful window displays in local showrooms.) “We started chatting and showed him the samples we had in our bags. He was like, ‘That’s good with this’ and ‘No, not that one,’ and pulled something together in, like, a minute. It was clear we were in sync,” she says.

Meyers first brought Sikes in to work on the outdoor areas of her property, which finally culminated in what they refer to as a “refresh” of pretty much the whole house. “From my perspective, what I did was more about giving the house an ‘updated new essence’ than anything else,” he says, pointing out that many layouts remain virtually unchanged from what Meyers and James Radin, her house’s first interior designer, conceived of when she first moved in. “Nothing was a complete departure from what was there before; what you see here is really Nancy’s personal style.”

Full of natural light, warm woods, and pillowy white linen sofas, it’s as gorgeous, inviting, and casual-easy-living California as a home a Meyers heroine might inhabit. These are not rooms built around single showstopping elements, like million-dollar paintings or car-size light fixtures; they feel

THE KITCHEN BOASTS A PAIR OF ISLANDS. BUELL STOOLS FROM 1STDIBS; ANN-MORRIS PENDANT LIGHTS; WATERWORKS SINK FITTINGS. THE PLATES AND BOWL ON THE LEFT COUNTER ARE BY CAROLINA IRVING & DAUGHTERS.



"I always wanted a big farmhouse-style kitchen," Meyers explains. "In my old house, I would have to ask someone to scooch in so I could open the refrigerator door."

MEYERS TIDIES UP THE LAWN WITH HER LEAF BLOWER. BELOW PALECEK CHAIRS SURROUND A TABLE FROM LUCCA ANTIQUES IN THE KITCHEN'S DINING AREA.



unburdened by the effort to impress (while of course making visitors coo with longing). More than a few of Meyers's new additions, such as the antique table in her entryway, come from Rose Tarlow, whose store in Los Angeles has been a favorite source for years. (It's where one particularly eye-catching side table featured in Diane Keaton's bedroom in *Something's Gotta Give* was found.) The one construction project Meyers did undertake, an airy new poolhouse with a wall of sliding glass doors, seamlessly echoes the main house.

"I like creams, I like whites, I like black accents," Meyers says, gesturing around her living room. "I've always been in this zone." Asked about her decision to use white linen fabrics for both her den and her living room, she pauses, an almost quizzical expression on her face. "I think I hesitate to do color because I don't know that I'd ultimately be happy with it." Then she adds with some urgency: "It's not quite as bright white when you see it in person," she says. "The living room tones are a little more flax colored."

According to Sikes, it's these subtleties that make all the difference when decorating à la Nancy. "We may have looked at 50,000 different ivory linens," he jokes. The different palettes in the two spaces are the result of very careful deliberation, he explains. "The family room has off-white sofas and flax drapery, while the living room has nubby flax upholstery, ivory pillows, and darker flax drapery." He considered





AN ARTWORK BY ELLSWORTH KELLY HANGS ABOVE A SECTIONAL UPHOLSTERED IN C&C MILANO FABRIC IN THE UPSTAIRS FAMILY ROOM. A STRIPED FABRIC BY FERMOIE COVERS THE OTTOMAN, AND THE RATTAN CHAIR IS BY BONACINA 1889.

it a triumph when he persuaded his color-cautious client to add muted notes of greens to the family room. And it took “years” of gentle pushing until Meyers agreed, after much coaxing, to position a pair of slat-back chairs at the entrance to the living room. “It’s in Nancy’s DNA to question and analyze everything,” he says. “The road of getting there is a process.”

WHEN IT COMES TO MEYERS’S luxuriously large kitchen featuring not one but two islands, however, he refuses to take credit. Created when the house was constructed 24 years ago, the major elements—from the Cotswolds-style stone floors to the glass-fronted white cabinetry—remain unchanged. The room is still one of her favorites. “I always wanted a big farmhouse-style kitchen,” she explains. “In my old house I would have to ask someone to scooch in so I could open the refrigerator door.” Sikes kept his hand light here, swapping in barrel-back wicker chairs and white Ann-Morris pendants. “These counter stools are new too,” Meyers notes, adding a confession: “I saw them in a photo of Ina Garten’s house and I copied them!”

In another example of judicious restraint, Sikes left Meyers’s home office untouched, its handsome dark-wood desk centered in front of huge windows. “It has good vibes,” she admits. “I remember standing

here with Mark, saying, should we change it? But he said, no, it looks great.”

The filmmaker’s grandest gesture by far was the construction of an 840-square-foot poolhouse, sited on a raised limestone terrace. “If I were to write about the build of this thing, I would call it ‘I thought I needed two umbrellas,’” she jokes. Its genesis, she reveals, lay in the unremarkable fact that after cutting down an overgrown ficus hedge, she needed some shade by her pool. That hypothetical pair of umbrellas became a full-fledged poolhouse, which in turn led to a new pool (now rectangular instead of oval), as well as a quest for clay roof tiles to match the ones on the house. For inside the structure, Sikes designed clean-lined built-in furniture (again, white upholstery) for a beautiful blend of form and function.

It was a huge production to be sure, but then again, nothing that this Hollywood heavy hitter couldn’t handle. And in a nice closing of the circle, the architect she hired to design the structure, Loren Kroeger, was on the original team of architects from Howard Backen’s AD100 firm who designed the proposed smaller house next door that Meyers left standing at the altar 16 years ago. In effect, our heroine got to keep her big house and get her brand-new little house too. Talk about a happy ending. “It’s great, isn’t it?” she says. **▲**

ELLSWORTH KELLY



THE TERRACE IS FURNISHED WITH SEATING BY THE WICKER WORKS WITH CUSHIONS OF PERENNIALS FABRIC. STONE-TOPPED COCKTAIL TABLE BY SUTHERLAND FURNITURE; RH UMBRELLA; FORMATIONS HURRICANE LANTERNS.