

# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

## Ellen DeGeneres and Portia de Rossi's Rustic Residence in California

The Beverly Hills compound is the seventh home the host-comedian and her wife, Portia, have shared; one for every year they've been together

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*Portia de Rossi and Ellen DeGeneres at their Beverly Hills house, which was designed by architects Buff & Hensman and later expanded by decorator Melinda Ritz. In a sitting area adjacent to the kitchen, an 18th-century French worktable is paired with a suite of vintage bent-plywood chairs by Gerald Summers; the large painting is an Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat*

collaboration, and the drawing to its left is by Bill Traylor. The cocktail table is 19th-century Belgian, the torchère is by [Waldo's Designs](#), and the Kirman rug is antique.

Residential compounds are nothing out of the ordinary in Beverly Hills, where privacy, security, and exclusivity are the sine qua nons of daily life. But even in this more-is-more city, there can't be too many properties that take up the better part of a street. The lane in question proceeds through a series of forbidding gates and winds steeply up a dramatic hill before arriving at the main house—a modern pile with stucco walls and a steel pitched roof. Given the approach, a visitor can be forgiven for expecting an armed reception committee or a pack of snarling Dobermans. Instead one is greeted by Mabel, a self-possessed black standard poodle, and Wolf, a shy white rescue dog, accompanied by their owner Ellen DeGeneres.

Dressed in a button-down shirt and shorts, the comedian-cum-talk show host leads the way through her lofty living room to the kitchen, where her wife, actor Portia de Rossi, has been preparing a vegan casserole to take to the couple's 26-acre farm north of Los Angeles. It's hard to imagine a place more enticing than their three-acre base, but De Rossi, an avid dressage rider, keeps her German warmbloods in the country, and for DeGeneres the second home provides an extra outlet for what can safely be described as an obsession with real estate and interior design.

"We never had a house when I was growing up," DeGeneres explains, settling into an armchair on one of several terraces with panoramic views of L.A. "We always rented. But my father would dream, and we used to look at houses all the time. I'd pick out which bedroom would be mine and get all excited." Born in Metairie, Louisiana, she dropped out of college and worked as a housepainter and a bartender before developing a stand-up act that launched a rather more durable career in the entertainment industry. (*The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, recipient of 36 daytime Emmy awards, began its ninth season this fall.) "The first thing I did when I made money was buy a house. And then—"

“Another one,” De Rossi says. “And another one and another one and another one...”



*A Ping-Pong table by Argentine artist Rirkrit Tiravanija makes a playful statement in the entrance hall, which features a Spanish Colonial bench from Lief and a Serge Mouille chandelier; the 19th-century Agra carpet is from the Melrose Project.*

DeGeneres has lost track of exactly how many homes she has owned but says the Beverly Hills compound is the seventh she and De Rossi have shared. That would be one for every year they’ve been together. And they don’t appear to be losing momentum: The couple has been toying with the idea of putting the house on the market.

No question the property would make for an extraordinary listing. Built by the renowned architects Buff & Hensman for actor Laurence Harvey, the single-story residence has been inhabited over the years by actor Joan Collins and, most recently, *Will & Grace* cocreator Max Mutchnick. Under his watch, interior designer Melinda Ritz expanded the house and warmed it up with reclaimed-wood floors and ceiling beams. “We’d heard how beautiful it was,” remembers De Rossi, “and then

we came over to watch *American Idol*. We pulled into the driveway and—we just knew before we even walked through the gate.”

“We loved it so much we bought it furnished,” DeGeneres says. Which is not to suggest she didn’t have big plans for it. “Changing my environment is in my blood. Like, the living room has probably been through five or six incarnations since.”

“Five or six?” De Rossi asks. “More like 15 or 16. Seriously.”

In this case changing her environment also entailed purchasing two neighboring properties, replacing one with a pond and several dozen carob, pear, and oak trees. When it came to the 9,500-square-foot main house and its two guest cottages, DeGeneres wanted to make the rooms “a little less uniform and formal.” So it is that the very first thing one notices upon entering the house is a Ping-Pong table. Not your regulation folding Masonite number, but a steel-and-glass version—one of ten executed by Argentine artist Rirkrit Tiravanija in 2008. It sits on a 19th-century Agra carpet in the entrance hall, which also accommodates pieces as diverse as a Serge Mouille chandelier, a Spanish Colonial bench, and a Jeff Koons puppy vase (it holds the Ping-Pong balls). The living room, in its current rendition, is equally eclectic. A Roman bust gazes past a graphic painting by Mark Grotjahn, Louis XVI bergères mingle with slipcovered sofas, and a Jean Prouvé jib lamp casts light on one of the African masks DeGeneres has collected.

The comedian enlisted a handful of L.A. dealers and designers—among them Tommy and Kathleen Clements, Cliff Fong, and Harrison Holman—to help her cherry-pick furniture, objects, and art for the house. Some pieces are museum-quality, some are deeply personal, and some are both. In one of the guest rooms is a Cité chair by Prouvé, which De Rossi had Fong track down in Europe as a surprise for DeGeneres when they first started dating. The Diego Giacometti feline sculpture in the master bathroom was another gift, marking DeGeneres’s 50th birthday (the

couple has three cats in addition to the dogs). They both admire the work of Jean-Michel Basquiat, whose raw Neo-Expressionist painting *Untitled (Aopkhes)* enlivens a corner of the living room. In the dining room, Basquiat cohort Andy Warhol is represented by a large-scale rendering of a Puma sneaker. “I’m sort of known for wearing tennis shoes, so it was a no-brainer. I had to have it,” DeGeneres says.

Her signature footwear fills floor-to-ceiling shelves in the couple’s dressing room—yang to the yin of De Rossi’s Jimmy Choos and Manolo Blahniks. The house feels tailor-made to their needs, from the media room where the pair were married and “live at night” to the meditation room where they get massages. DeGeneres works out every day in a state-of-the-art gym, while De Rossi does laps in the pool. There’s an Emmy-filled office where DeGeneres wrote her new book, *Seriously...I’m Kidding*, and a separate suite where De Rossi penned her memoir, *Unbearable Lightness*.

“We spend most nights and most weekends here at home, unless we’re at the farm,” De Rossi says. Given their attachment to the property, one might reasonably wonder why they would, once again, move on. Offers DeGeneres, “There comes a time when I get antsy and need to do something else.”

“We maybe want something a little smaller,” says De Rossi. “And we’ve never had a Spanish together.”

“Yeah, we did. The George Washington Smith in Montecito.”

“Forgot about that.”

Whatever they decide in the immediate future, history suggests their current home won’t be their last. “If we’re just lying in bed,” DeGeneres jokes, “I’ll say, ‘What are

you thinking about?’ and she’ll say, ‘Horses. What are you thinking about?’ and I’ll say, ‘Houses.’”

“For the record,” De Rossi chimes in, “mine is the cheaper hobby.”

<http://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/ellen-degeneres-and-portia-de-rossi-beverly-hills-home-article>