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# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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## Exclusive: **WILL+JADA PINKETT SMITH**

### **At Home with Hollywood's Power Family**



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## THE PURSUIT of HAPPINESS

For their family's highly personal retreat near Calabasas, California, stars Will and Jada Pinkett Smith called on architect Stephen Samuelson to design a home full of intimate spaces, organic forms, and handcrafted details

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The Smith clan: (from left) Trey, Willow, Jaden, Will, and Jada—who is currently starring in *HawthoRNe* on TNT. Will's next film, due in May 2012, is *Men in Black III*.

**Opposite:** Their adobe-style house, designed by architect Stephen Samuelson, with interiors by Judith Lance. For details see Sources.



The living room includes a 1930s copper lantern from Downtown, columns wrapped in jute rope, a pair of '60s Brazilian rosewood chairs (at left) from Noho Modern, custom-made lounge seating (at right) upholstered in a Rose Tarlow leather, wing chairs covered in kilims and leather, and a beige silk area rug by Hokanson.

#### ANY HANDS

have left their mark on the home of Will and Jada Pinkett Smith. Hundreds of master woodworkers, plasterers, metalsmiths, stonemasons, and upholsterers contributed their expertise to this deeply personal project. "Everything needed to be done by hand," Will says. "We wanted to feel the love and labor that went into every piece of this place."

And you can. The 25,000-square-foot house has a surprising intimacy—a soul animated by the craftsmanship on display and the spirit of the celebrity power couple that live here with their children, Willow, Jaden, and Trey, Will's son from his first marriage. "For Will and me this home was always a spiritual endeavor," Jada says. "We're very earthy, organic people. We wanted to create a family retreat, something made by hand and as natural as possible, something that ties back to the land." →



**From top:** The dining room features reclaimed ceiling beams and a custom-made table sheathed in lacquered linen; the walnut dining chairs with bronze-staple detailing are upholstered in a Beacon Hill fabric, and the silk-and-wool area rug is from Woven Accents. In the kitchen, Samuelson fashioned cabinetry from 19th-century Nuristani oak panels. **Opposite:** A large retractable skylight floods the double-height living room with natural illumination. The pair of vintage resin tusks is from Downtown, and the lanterns at left are Moroccan.

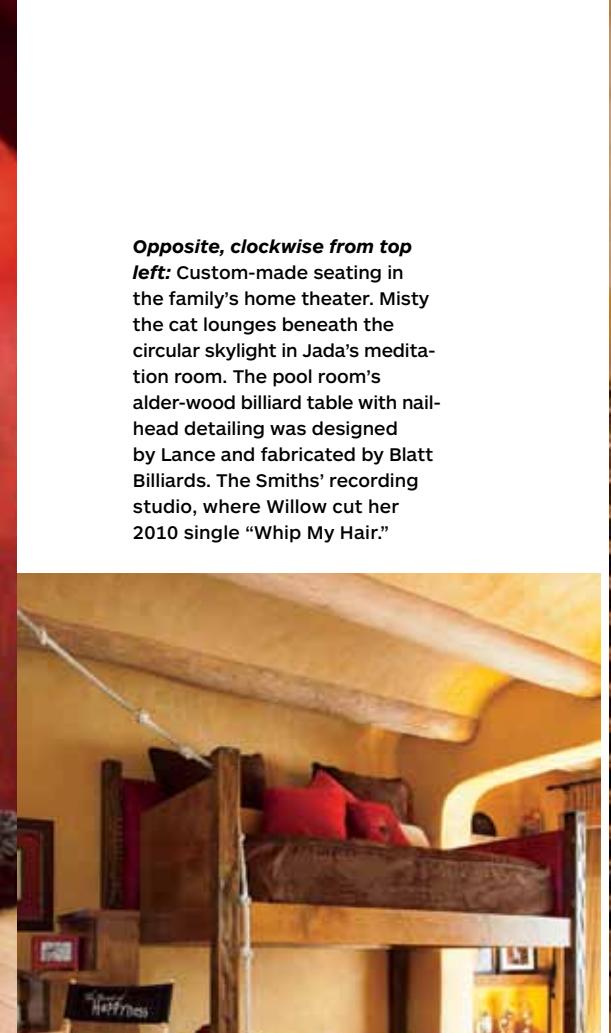


The Smiths' domestic odyssey began when Will was working with costar Gene Hackman filming the 1998 thriller *Enemy of the State*. "Gene loves Santa Fe," Will says. "He has a house there, and he always talked about it. And then *Wild Wild West* came up, and we were shooting outside of Santa Fe. So I thought, Let me go see Gene's house." He admired what he saw. "I just loved that adobe flavor and feeling."

As it happened, Hackman's home, designed by local architect Stephen Samuelson, had been published in *Architectural Digest* (April 1990)—as had another

Samuelson Santa Fe residence, the adobe retreat of Carol Burnett, which graced the cover in December '96. The photos convinced the Smiths to contact the architect, and their collaboration took off in earnest the following year, when the couple acquired a ranch nestled in the Santa Monica Mountains near Calabasas, California. One of the primary draws of the property was a picturesque man-made lake with views of majestic Saddle Peak in the distance. In short order Will and Jada purchased a string of adjacent plots to assemble the rambling 150-acre parcel: their sylvan Shangri-la. →

**Above:** The free-form pool, designed by the estate's landscape architect, Daniel Busbin. **Opposite, from top:** Will calls the lake gazebo his favorite spot: "Answers come to me out there," he says. The 150-acre property's secluded mountain setting.



**Opposite, clockwise from top**  
**left:** Custom-made seating in the family's home theater. Misty the cat lounges beneath the circular skylight in Jada's meditation room. The pool room's alder-wood billiard table with nail-head detailing was designed by Lance and fabricated by Blatt Billiards. The Smiths' recording studio, where Willow cut her 2010 single "Whip My Hair."

Given the environmentally sensitive landscape and the area's labyrinth of regulations, the building-permit process dragged on for four years. Construction finally commenced in 2003, after Samuelson and his team had regraded the property to its natural topography and restored sections that had been leveled for equestrian use.

The architect marshaled a small army of workers to apply the hand-troweled plaster that defines the character of the two-story home, which curves around itself, encompassing a motor court. "The aesthetic is anchored in history and the various interpretations of adobe in Persian, Moroccan, Spanish, as well as Southwest American cultures," Samuelson explains.

The textural quality of traditional three-layer stucco, with all its inherent imperfections, is echoed in exposed ceiling timbers harvested from old homesteads

and barns. Banisters of hammered wrought iron and floors inlaid with river stones in spiral and infinity-knot patterns reinforce the project's hand-forged ethos and spiritual aspirations.

Ancient cultures are referenced throughout—thanks to the Smiths' collection of antique carved panels, doors, and architectural details from the Middle East, Africa, the American Southwest, and Asia, including the house's monumental front door, which once provided entry to a fort in northern India. "I have a thing for doors," Jada confesses. "I always think of them as a threshold to something new."

The Smiths consulted with designer Waldo Fernandez to get the interiors under way, but for the past couple of years the rooms have been fine-tuned by Los Angeles-based decorator Judith Lance. "When I

**Above, from left:**  
Jaden's bedroom, with its salvaged ceiling vigas, includes a set chair from his 2006 feature-film debut. The iron four-poster in Willow's bedroom is draped with a canopy of patterned silk.



The master suite includes a custom-made bed with a draped canopy of brass ball chains, as well as lounge chairs upholstered in an Old World Weavers cotton with matching chain fringe. The repoussé drum stool is by Robert Kuo; the hand-knotted-silk area rug, designed by Lance, was made by Tai Ping.



started, the footprint, finish materials, stone, and paint were already in place," Lance says. "The aesthetic note was set. Everything [I added] had to look handcrafted but at the same time refined and sophisticated."

Using reference books on tribal jewelry as her points of departure, Lance ennobled specific rooms with exquisite custom-made pieces. In the living room she installed a serpent-themed fireplace screen of copper mesh, hand-hammered bronze, and carnelian cabochons. A cloistered seating area off the formal dining room boasts foliate sconces of twisted brass wire by artist Mary Brogger and a bespoke chandelier of bronze and leather, with rock-crystal beads hand-strung by Lance's assistants. In the master suite the designer's coup de théâtre is a bed canopy constructed of tiny ball chains, which is suspended from the ceiling by links of bronze.

Samuelson's spatial composition, full of secret nooks and tranquil alcoves, utilizes generously swooping

curves and unorthodox geometries so the many rooms, both large and small, flow and connect like a lyrical run-on sentence. "The idea was no dead ends," Will says. "To create an infinite cycle that represented what Jada and I hoped for our love."

For Lance, the architecture's fluid shapes meant every piece of custom-made furniture had to be meticulously tailored. "That was the beauty and challenge of this project," she says. "Everything I did had to be incredibly precise, both in terms of engineering and aesthetics. Nothing here came off the shelf."

It seems only natural that this decidedly organic home should continue to evolve. "It's definitely a work in progress," Jada says. "Will and I were very young when we started the house, so it keeps on changing as we get older and understand how we really live in it. But whatever it becomes, the craftsmanship will always represent our union and the love of our family." □

**Opposite, clockwise from top left:**  
Will and Jada's room-size closet features built-in shelving and an overscale ottoman. The shower in the master bathroom is a glittering cocoon of inlaid pebbles. Suspended above the circular bathtub is a vintage Bruce Eicher chandelier from Dana John. The bedroom terrace has pendant lights by Tom Dixon, drum tables by Studio JRM, and cushions covered in Donghia, Holly Hunt, and Perennials fabrics.