

in living color

A Cartoon Animator and His Family Turn Up
the Volume in a Wacky Modern House

by barbara thornburg → photographed by fernando bengoechea

Leave it to an animation artist to dream up a color-splashed house where a 15-foot-long submarine, life-sized cartoon figures and electronic disco balls keep company with a serious modern art collection.

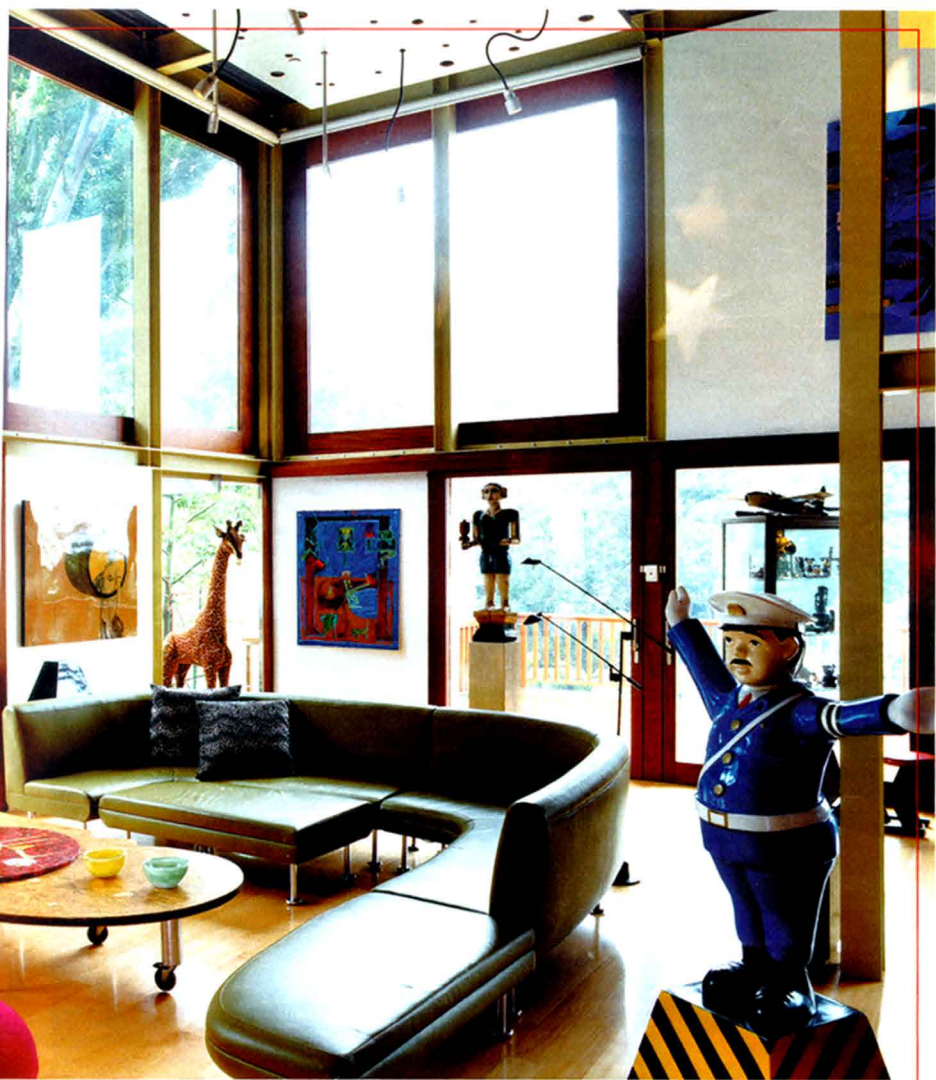
"We told our architect to do the most imaginative, wild and crazy house you ever dreamed of," says Gabor Csupo, co-chairman of Klasky Csupo Studio and an animation artist whose credits include "Rugrats," "The Simpsons" and "The Wild Thornberrys."

Csupo and his wife Bret hired Los Angeles architect Aleks Istanbullu to remodel their 1950s ranch-style house off Mulholland Drive. Only the clover-shaped pool—legend has it that Esther Williams was once filmed swimming there—remains of the original structure. Standing in its place is a three-story ultra-modern house that's straight out of Toonville.

For the main entry, the architect devised a red trapezoidal box that leads to the living room. "It's a funnel to go through before you pop out into the interior," he says. Inside, serpentine modern light fixtures hang from a suspended ceiling, which reveals a blue corrugated-metal roof. Audiovisual



→ In the loft-like living room of the Csupos' Mulholland



ern furniture keeps company with eclectic pieces, such as a 1930s Japanese display cop and carved Indonesian figures



equipment transforms the living room into a lively disco. "The room really rocks," Istanbulli says. "The music is so loud you feel it." A modern take on the disco ball rotates colored light beams of stars, flowers and hearts onto walls. When the dancing mood hits, the coffee table rolls conveniently out of the way, and the large sectional sofa breaks down into small island lounges that are perfect for watching the action. "We like to have fun," says Bret, a singer, songwriter and poet.

In an adjoining room, the home theater features a 13-foot-wide screen and plush theater armchairs. Their entertainment library includes close to 20,000 DVDs, CDs, laser discs, videos and records. "It's like going to your video store, only much better," Istanbulli says.

In the center of the living area, a stairway wraps around an 18-foot-long koi pond. The submarine and three giant wooden fish floating above mark the spot. "It's really the heart of the house," the

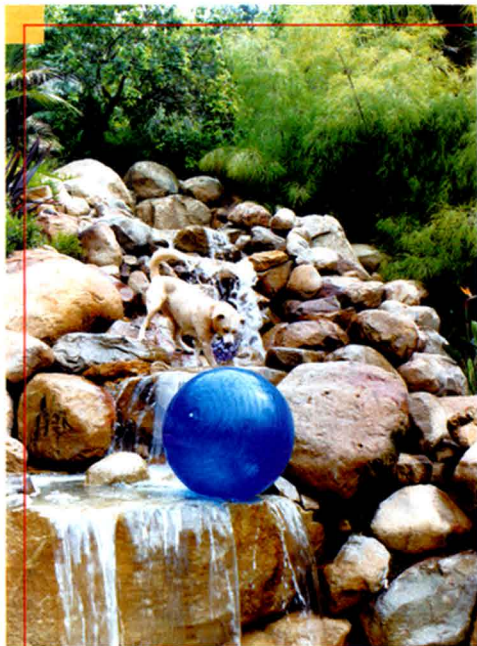
architect says. "You have to pass the pond anywhere." The living, dining, kitchen rooms, as well as the couple's two office, extensive film and music library, occupy the floor. Upstairs on the mezzanine, a large room with a cantilevered balcony overlooks the living room. The children's rooms are the hall, while the master bedroom suite sitting and workout rooms are on the floor. In a house inhabited by a golden retriever, miniature greyhound, Persian cat, 12 turtles, an aquarium full of tropical fish and children (ages 9 months to 18 years), a visiting friend, the master suite is a quiet place where the couple can relax.

Gabor compares the decor to a Frank Sinatra composition. "He liked to mix styles together—lounges, classical, jazz. He created a new form of music no one had ever heard before." The same might be said of the

→ On the landing outside the master bedroom suite, classic chairs from the 1960s, such as Gaetano Pesce's UPS and Eero Aarnio's plastic bubble chair, o



A Poppy character on a rocket hangs above an Eero Aarnio Ball chair in a small hallway, where the children's bedroom doors are painted in bright cartoon colors, right.



home. They've decorated with an array of pieces found on trips abroad, at flea markets and at Wacky's on Hollywood Boulevard. Carved Indonesian figures, Indian buddhas, Streamline Moderne figures, Hungarian movie posters and cartoon characters accompany more serious works by Picasso, Matisse and Dalí. "I like a whole mix of things," says Gabor, a Hungarian native. "Whatever is the best—past, present or future."

Although Istanbulbılı initially envisioned a subtle color scheme for the modern interior, the Csipos had a brighter palette in mind. "We went around the house putting colors up on different walls," Bret says. Off the hall, the children's bedroom doors and a service area are painted red, blue, green and orange. "As artists we love color," Gabor says. "Keeping all the walls white would have been too boring."

Outside, the 2 1/2-acre property overlooking the San Fernando Valley is a lush preserve. Landscape designer Sue Natzler of Natzler Cunningham Designs in Eureka created an exotic garden with towering palms, a 15-foot-high stone waterfall, a small bridge over the pool and thatched umbrellas.

A circular stone outdoor fire pit just beyond the living room serves as a frequent gathering spot, where family and friends roast marshmallows and make s'mores. "We wanted our house to feel like our own private Hawaiian resort," Bret says. "The children's friends call the house 'Club Csipo.'" <



→ The family's golden retriever makes his way down a stone water



It was designed to feel like a Hawaiian resort, the family retained the original clover-shaped pool, designed by Philip Riley of Paddock Pools, in the 1950s.