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PROJECT
 Headey Residence
BUILDER
 Envision Design Build
LOCATION
 Los Angeles, California

You might expect Lena Headey to live in a Norman manor in Yorkshire or on the beach in celebrity-studded Malibu. But the *Game of Thrones* star, whose portrayal of the villainous Cersei Lannister is one of the wickedly entertaining high points of the HBO hit series, is right at home in the San Fernando Valley on a suburban street remarkable for its sheer normalcy. “One of my oldest pals said it’s like the neighborhood in *E.T.*,” she says. “It’s kid heaven.” And instead of calling in a big-name designer, the British actress was closely involved in her home’s renovation, working with a builder to transform it into an airy retreat that combines elements from >

Actress Lena Headey (above, with her mother, Susan) worked with builder Ted Broden to give her 1950s house an open feel. The living room includes a Cloud Track Arm sofa and chair from Restoration Hardware, a Woven Accents rug, and a Keegan chandelier by Arteriors.

Queen of the Castle

With a homespun renovation, *Game of Thrones* actress Lena Headey finally finds her keep.

“I just wanted the house to feel like I’m on holiday. There are no goblets, but there *are* some wine glasses.”
—Lena Headey, resident



England, the south of France, and one of her favorite spots on earth: Ibiza.

Low-ceilinged, with artificial turf indoors as well as out, the 1950s house that originally occupied the property didn’t immediately summon images of carefree island living, but Lena knew it was something she could build upon. “When I walked in, I said, ‘This is perfect.’ I could see the light it needed, and I could see the space we could create. I could see everything. And that was it.”

Her first California residence was a midcentury modern in the Hollywood

Hills, but it proved to be too big. “In England, we live in boxes that you pay millions for,” says Lena. “So when I got to L.A., I was like, ‘My god, everything is huge.’” After a divorce, the actress lived in a string of rentals, but she was itching to put her mark on her own place. Friends suggested hiring a designer, but she demurred (“It’s so un-English,” she says), calling on Ted Broden, of West Hollywood–based Envision Design Build, to give shape to her dream.

She began by handing him a three-ring binder brimming with ideas, from >

Dandelion cement tiles from Marrakech Design adorn the master bathroom (above left). The chair is from Lawson Fenning. Adding a partial second floor accommodated bedrooms for Lena; her son, Wylie; and her daughter, Teddy. The

master bedroom features a Chesterfield bed from Restoration Hardware and a pendant by Seppo Koho (above). “I saw tons of houses that were done and a few that needed redoing,” says Lena. “This one was small, but it made sense.”

focus

pictures of organic materials to light-filled rooms with exposed framing. On the first page was an ad showing a woman holding a very large kitchen knife and crying. Underneath, Lena had scrawled, "This is me if you f--- it up." She laughs at the memory. "I have a biting sense of humor," she says, "but I wasn't kidding."

Architectural designer Arthur Page drew up several floor plans featuring a full second story. Though it offered the square footage she wanted, Lena resisted what she calls "grand Los Angelean" features. "It's not my vibe," she explains. The remodel evolved into the addition of a partial second floor, making space for a master suite and bedrooms for the children. But they were careful not to overwhelm the site. "Lena didn't want the house to stick out like a sore thumb," Broden says.

With that goal in mind, he devised an interior that emphasizes openness and >



Broden gave the formerly low-ceilinged living room a high pitch and added more windows for light (top). For the floors, Lena chose salvaged oak hand-laid in a herringbone pattern. The Roar + Rabbit dresser is from West Elm.

The exterior, which was taken down to the studs and rebuilt, pairs the original concrete block with reclaimed hemlock, which clads two sides of the upstairs addition (above). A crisp concrete pathway leads to the entrance (above left).

In the backyard, Lena combined a hammock from a former home with Maya chaises from Room & Board. A Woolly Pockets green wall system holds a variety of succulents. "They're beautiful and architectural," Lena says of the plants. "And I can't kill them, which makes me so happy."



a connection with the outdoors, while also comfortably accommodating friends and family from abroad. Making it kid-friendly was another priority (Lena's son, Wylie, age six, was joined in 2015 by baby sister Teddy, who now sleeps in what was meant to be the master sitting room). "Here I've incorporated my Ibiza self and my practical parent self," Lena says with a sly smile. "I can't be sitting around drinking rosé."

Once work began, Broden, formerly a construction project manager at Marmol Radziner, uncovered asbestos ceilings, water damage, and a serious mold infestation, which prompted taking the structure down to the studs and rebuilding. At Lena's request, they kept existing elements like the patterned concrete block wall out front; the >



“Having a family house, with everyone together, was always Lena’s goal,” says Broden. The outdoor shower, which he designed in collaboration with landscape contractors Warren-Avard, is surrounded by reclaimed hemlock planters.

expansive living room windows, which were replicated elsewhere; and the pool. Although the kitchen sits in the same location as it did originally, it is now completely open to the family room, which sported an enormous curved bar, a pizza oven, and faux beams when Lena bought the place. During framing, the actress decided she liked the exposed rafters so much that Broden rebuilt the roof at a higher pitch and finished it off by whitewashing the new beams. When Lena asked if they could open the rear of the house to the backyard, Broden, Page, and structural engineer Alexandre Basso revised the plan to expand the home’s footprint and add a shear wall upstairs.

Lena wanted whitewashed wood flooring throughout the home. “We did lots of experiments but couldn’t get it right,” she recalls. Then she suggested herringbone. Using reclaimed oak from a Kentucky tobacco farm, Broden’s team laid the floors by hand. It’s a detail that

delights Lena: “It feels so good on your bare feet; it’s really soft wood.” She also asked Broden to leave the structural beams that were installed during construction in the kitchen and family room as is, without finishing them with plaster. “They have writing on them and rusty old bolts,” she marvels.

The kitchen and bathrooms feature encaustic floor tiles in three blue-and-white designs. While on location in Ireland for *Thrones*, Lena saw a dandelion-patterned tile on Pinterest. She >



“What I originally liked about the house was that it had good proportions. It’s not too big. You can’t get lost. And yet you can have a minute.”
—Lena Headey

“Visually, I like the simplicity of midcentury design. I like the lines of it more than the other styles you see here in L.A.” —Lena Headey



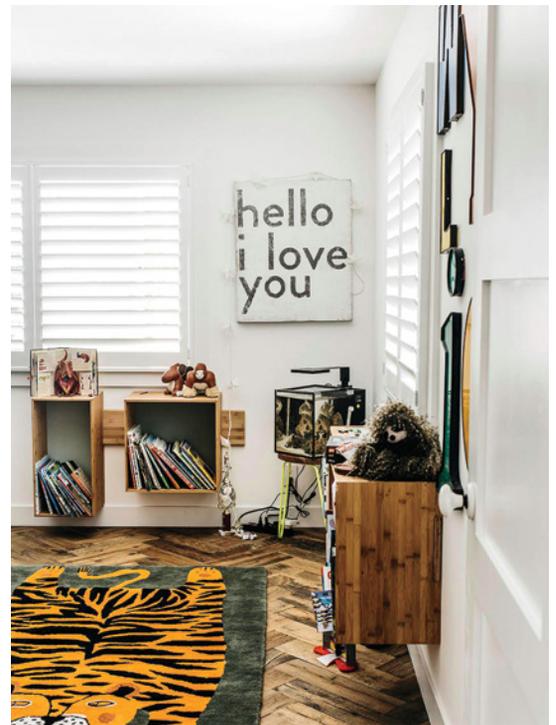
A downstairs guest bedroom (above) is a welcome retreat for visitors. “Because I do so much traveling, if someone comes to stay, I want them to feel they can just be,” says Lena. The Roar + Rabbit brass-inlaid nightstand is from West

Elm. Wylie’s bedroom (above right) features a rug from the Land of Nod and a sign from a local shop. “I put the shelves up myself on my seventh attempt,” Lena says. “If I move them, I guarantee you’ll see nineteen holes.”

forwarded the image to Broden, who tracked down the tile to a Swedish manufacturer and installed it in the master bathroom.

“Lena’s very specific about her taste,” Broden explains. “When she doesn’t like something, she has reasons for it, and they’re hilarious.” For instance, when he asked about putting a fireplace in her bedroom, she balked. “It made me cringe,” she recalls. “I like it when you’re skiing. It’s a bit porno in the Valley.” Likewise, when she first saw the tub she’d chosen for the master bathroom installed and ready for use, she told Broden, “This looks like a showroom.” It now sits in the garden, ready for outdoor soaking.

Lena admits her taste is “not super standard,” adding that she favors things “a bit rough and not totally finished.” To pieces she’d kept in storage for years she’s since added one-of-a-kind light fixtures found at shops around Los Angeles; she’s also partial to “scrappy” >



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Moroccan rugs and lounge-y upholstered furniture. “The house doesn’t feel forced,” Broden says of the mix. “It’s in line with Lena’s personality. She doesn’t want to show off.”

Now that she has a real home to return to between shoots, Lena says she thinks it might be fun to try her hand at flipping houses—not so much for economic gain, but to counter the McMansions that seem to be proliferating overnight. “They’re ruining neighborhoods that are unique and visually pleasing,” she says.

For now, she’s enjoying being part of a community, even if area residents look twice when they realize the woman ferrying her son and his friends to school is none other than Queen Cersei. Then again, they probably already knew they had an original in their midst. After bringing them wine and gift cards during construction, she explained what they could expect having her as a neighbor: “You may see us naked, and you may hear us fighting. Those are two things that will probably happen.” □



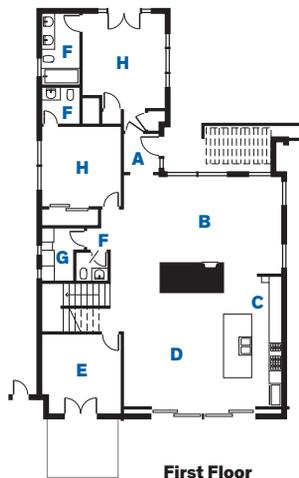
Fleetwood sliders open the kitchen and family room to the backyard (top). The pendants over the kitchen island are from Cisco Home; the bar chairs are by Studio One for Lost & Found. The patterned concrete tile floor is from Mission Tile West,

as is the mirrored backsplash (above), which was originally meant for the living room fireplace. “I think we over-ordered,” Lena recalls. “So I said, ‘Let’s do a disco backsplash.’ It just needs to make you smile, and I think it does.”

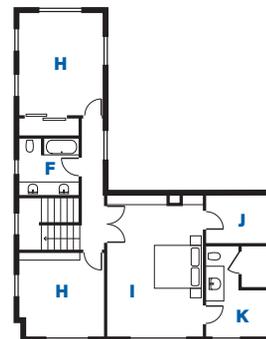
Headey Residence Plan



- A Entrance
- B Living Room
- C Kitchen
- D Family Room
- E Playroom
- F Bathroom
- G Laundry Room
- H Bedroom
- I Master Bedroom
- J Master Closet
- K Master Bathroom



First Floor



Second Floor

ILLUSTRATION: LOHNES + WRIGHT