



Palisadian Cathleen Gallagher has designed and built this home on Las Lomas Avenue in Pacific Palisades that will come on the market in early October.

Rich Schmitt/Staff Photographer

## Building a 'Couture' Home in the Palisades

By BROOKES NOHLGREN  
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If you happen to drop by 609 Las Lomas Avenue over the next couple of weeks, you'll likely find a flurry of activity, with some 30 craftsmen giving the home its finishing touches before being available for purchase. What you won't find is the typical burly contractor-type guy at the project's helm. In fact, you will find quite the opposite.

Pacific Palisades resident Cathleen Gallagher is anything but your stereotypical homebuilder. She was only a teenager when "discovered" by the Elite Modeling Agency and over the next decade she worked with some of the world's most notable fashion icons (including Yves Saint Laurent, Calvin Klein, Prada, John Galliano, Valentino and Karl Lagerfeld) and appeared on more than 20 Vogue covers around the world.

As her modeling career wound down (though she still takes on occasional jobs in the fashion industry), Cathleen looked into other areas that she was passionate about and discovered architectural home design.

Back in 1970s, when home building was a truly male-dominated industry, Cathleen's mother, Rita, was making a name for herself as a developer in New Jersey. She started out as the assistant of a builder and not long after, people were asking her opinion on projects. She quickly became a full-fledged developer within the firm.

Cathleen often visited the home sites her mother was working on and learned from her, as she says, "by osmo-

sis." She credits learning much of what she knows about the business side of the industry from her mom, "and how things are done as they relate to function: how design ideas work or don't work. But it was through fashion that the aesthetic was created and inspired in me."

*"[The Palisades] is everything I hoped California could be."*

Cathleen, unlike her mother, who developed townhomes and condominiums, builds individual, custom homes—*couture* homes, if you will. This means both a uniqueness that stems from a singular idea as well as a total dedication to every detail.

"Karl Lagerfeld," she explains, "will design one dress for Chanel. The reason it's so expensive is that it's unique, one of a kind, created with one idea, one inspiration in mind for that particular dress. All the tiny details



The front-door handle at 609 Las Lomas.  
Rich Schmitt/Staff Photographer

make up the whole." Cathleen learned the process firsthand, modeling in couture shows for icons who built the dress for her.

She sees building a home as much the same process. Her inspiration is the people who will live there. "If you have a concept in your mind," she says, "and you can execute it from the function that you know it is going to serve, then you can literally build your dream."

For Cathleen, "building her dream" truly began only after discovering the Palisades in 1995. Originally from the East Coast (Long Island and New Jersey), Cathleen admits that it was a fortuitous tip from a cousin in real estate that brought her to the place she now happily calls home with her husband (television director James Lima) and their two daughters.

"My cousin was sending us to Santa Monica," Cathleen recalls, "but I found it 'cold,' unlike a New England town with a heartbeat in the center. Then he mentioned a rental on Toyopa and when we visited, we realized that the Palisades was exactly where we wanted to live."

Cathleen loved the town's small village style and the friendly, personal way of living. "The quaint charm reminded me of the East Coast, but with the added benefit of so much sun," she says. "In the Palisades, we could walk to so many places. And I could actually get to know my neighbors, a connection that was really important. We are very involved in our church (Corpus Christi), where the people are very community minded. The Palisades is a caring community of people who are actually rooting for you and care

about you. That's the number one reason why I'm here. It's everything I hoped California could be."

Cathleen's fondness for the Palisades and its people is a primary inspiration for the homes she is building here (starting with her family's own home). "When people walk into a home I've built, I want them to instantly say that it just feels right, to get that sense of 'This is where I'm going to live.'"

It's also important to Cathleen that the homes fit into the fabric of the Palisades. "The first thing I do when I look at a property is to see how the home is going to be part of the land. 'Does this work with the light? Does this work with the street? Does it work with the neighborhood? Is it part of the fabric that is the Palisades?'"

There is a delicate balance between function and style. Getting this balance right creates a home that people feel comfortable in."

She continued, "When the Las Lomas property came along [south of Sunset], it was so special and beautifully unique. Because it's on a promontory, I stood at the point and just looked back at it and all I could think of was 'This reminds me of the hilly coast of Carmel or the Hamptons. I envisioned the home completed and how it anchored this beautiful place,'" while offering a full ocean view from the roof deck and unrestricted mountain views from the back of the house.

"It has been a goal of mine to do a traditional-style home that incorporated green features," Cathleen says, "so I made an environmentally conscious home of the Las Lomas property, built in the



The staircase in Cathleen Gallagher's new home on Las Lomas "cost a fortune," she says, "but is worth every penny. It's one of my favorite features in the house."  
Rich Schmitt/Staff Photographer

California Craftsman style. I wanted to show home buyers that a green house doesn't have to be limited to a modern home with a flat roof for the solar panels to work and still be aesthetically pleasing."

At Las Lomas, Cathleen has created a 'green' home, complete with a filtration pit, plants that are indigenous to the environment, a satellite drip system that saves water, and solar panels that power everything.

"These small steps aren't

hard to do," she says, "and the more people do them, collectively we will begin to make a difference."

At almost 7,000 square feet, the 7-bedroom, 7-1/2-bath home is being marketed by co-listing brokers Anthony Marguleas of Amalfi Estates and Dan Urbach of Prudential California Realty. It will officially go on the market at the beginning of October.

(Brookes Nohlgren is a freelance writer and editor in Calabasas)