

tenants—this latest project is big even by Pompeo’s ambitious standards.

“It’s an old Paul Williams house from the ’20s, though they didn’t realize that when they sold it to us,” she says. “It’s been empty for so long. It’s a total *Grey Gardens* house. Raccoons are living in it. It’ll take at least a year for us to finish. I love doing the interiors myself, but I’m working with my friend Martyn Lawrence-Bullard on this one because it’s so huge. And Nancy Goslee Power is doing the gardens.”

For now, the architectural hobbyist has her hands full with a new baby, a looming restoration project and the title role on a hit one-hour show. But when this ride is over—the cast just renegotiated for two more seasons—she’ll be happy to move on, maybe have another baby, perhaps spend more time eating ice cream on a street corner in France.

“If the show ended right now, I’d still be thrilled,” she says. “I want to do something different. I want to challenge myself and go on auditions again and do something scary. Maybe I’ve forgotten how to act? Maybe I’ll be Meredith Grey forever.

“I just want to do good projects and good work for me,” she adds. “Those people who live their lives trying to make other people like them? There’s something wrong with their heads.” ●

## CROWN JEWELS

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on one of the freshly exposed walls for almost two weeks, thinking someone had affixed a hunk of quartz to the mine as a practical joke. Eventually, though, the foreman pried the crystal off the wall with a knife, only to discover that he was holding a nearly flawless 3,109-carat diamond of the highest color grade. “In over a hundred years, nothing has come even close to the Cullinan in terms of size and purity,” says Silver. “There may be something bigger out there—nothing’s finite about geology—but it’s truly remarkable,” he adds.

According to Robinson, Cullinan thus delivered on a promise he made to his wife, Annie, to one day bring her “the biggest diamond in the world.” But his plans for the crystal went far beyond the home front. In the wake of the recently ended Boer war between Britain and the Dutch-descended settlers of the Transvaal region of South Africa, Cullinan orchestrated the sale of the one-and-a-half-pound diamond to the government of Transvaal on the condition that it be given to Eng-

land’s King Edward VII as a diplomatic gesture of peace disguised as a birthday present. A *New York Times* report in 1907 indicated the King was nervous about accepting such a lavish gift from the relatively poor people of Transvaal but, “it is regarded as probable that the King will accept the present, as to decline it would be likely to cause ill-feeling, which is the last thing [England] wants to see in the Transvaal.” Lo and behold, the King did accept the Cullinan and sent it off to the Asscher Brothers of Amsterdam, who divided it into nine major gem-quality stones. The largest, 530 carats known as the First Star of Africa, is mounted in the head of the British royal scepter. The second-largest piece, 317 carats called the Lesser Star of Africa, became the fourth-largest polished diamond in the world and belongs, with the rest of the polished Cullinan fragments, to the Crown Jewels of the United Kingdom.

While she lost out on her husband’s biggest prize, Annie Cullinan would not be disappointed for long. For his true love, the master prospector set about crafting a special necklace featuring a handful of extraordinary stones. Cullinan’s mine remains the only known significant source of blue diamonds in the world, and he gradually assembled a set of nine luminous stones the color of the sky, along with 251 other diamonds, with which to forge his gift for Annie. The occasion to give her the necklace, which includes 5.32 carats of blue diamonds, arose when King George elected to knight Cullinan for his largesse and deft political maneuvering. The necklace was then passed to the first daughter in each successive Cullinan generation, winding its way through appearances at opera galas in Johannesburg all the way to a bank in downtown Portland, Oregon.

“Your great-grandfather was Thomas Cullinan?” asked Silver, imagining the various appraisers and possible buyers with whom Robinson might be meeting. “Well, yes,” she replied, without any particular pride or enthusiasm. “Let me tell you,” he said, “if anyone you show this necklace to does not know who your great-grandfather was, they have no business owning it.” Having established an understanding between them, Silver made an offer, which Robinson accepted. But just when the ink on the deal was nearly dry, she revealed she did have one more appointment that afternoon with an auction house from San Francisco, and she felt obligated to hear them out. Flummoxed at having the necklace

pulled out of his grasp, Silver, who was due back home that evening for his daughter’s seventh birthday party, implored her not to sign anything, no matter what they offered her, so that he would at least have the chance to make a counteroffer.

Back in Menlo Park, Silver found a message from Robinson that the auction house had named a price she couldn’t refuse. Alarmed, he called her, pressing to know whether they had actually written her a check outright, which auction houses are legally barred from doing. “Well no,” she answered, “but they assured me I would get at least one hundred thousand dollars more than what we had agreed on.” In the hours since first seeing the necklace, it had become increasingly clear to Silver that owning this glittering relic would not only be a point of pride, but would greatly lift the prominence of his business. The values being discussed for the piece transcended its material worth, and Silver decided it was worth pursuing the gem to add its mythical potency to his portfolio. “Rarely in our industry do you have something like this, with a firsthand accounting of history, with the piece being sold to you from a primary owner, with provenance that can be bona fide without question, and which the world has never been exposed to before,” says Silver. “I saw it as a career opportunity.”

And so he matched the auction house’s higher price, convincing Robinson to annul the contract she had signed with them. Silver dispatched an employee to retrieve the necklace from the auction house’s San Francisco coffers. “My biggest fear was that it wouldn’t be as beautiful or important as I thought,” he recalls. But when it arrived, it met all of his expectations. The question, then, was what to do with this trophy. The first move he made was to draft a letter to the National Gem Collection at the Smithsonian.

Silver didn’t have any intention of reselling the necklace to make a profit, and so he began a lengthy discussion with Jeffrey Post, Geologist and Curator-in-Charge of Mineral Sciences at the Smithsonian. Learning of the Cullinan Necklace’s existence from Silver was a revelation for Post. “Any piece these days that has any kind of significant blue diamonds in it is already special,” he says. One out of 200,000 diamonds might have a strong enough color to rate as a “colored” or “fancy” diamond, he notes, and among those few, blue is among the rarest, with only a handful being discovered every year, and some years none at all. But it was the necklace’s story that

really drew Post’s attention. “We might have been interested in it just because of the blue diamonds, but it’s a nice bonus that you have a piece that connects back to one of the most famous names in diamond history,” he says.

After a temporary one-year exhibit of the necklace at the Smithsonian in 1994, Silver continued to ponder where it should ultimately reside. And in 2006 he arrived at the conclusion the National Gem Collection, which he likens to America’s crown jewels, ought to be its home. The piece is now in Post’s hands in Washington, and he’s thrilled to be able to reveal this rare specimen to the public after its long and quiet journey from remote South Africa through the Northwest and down to San Francisco. “The most captivating gems bring together this wonderful confluence of natural history, human history and also beautiful artistry in one object,” he notes. “This necklace does that very well.” ●

### ON OUR COVER

Salvatore Ferragamo mixed cotton limone dress, \$1,490, Salvatore Ferragamo, S.F., 415-391-6565. Tiffany & Co. by Frank Gehry yellow-gold Paper cuff, \$12,500, Tiffany & Co., Beverly Hills, 310-273-8880. David Yurman gold Crossover cuff with pavé diamonds, \$6,300, and black onyx ring with pavé diamonds, \$4,500, David Yurman, Beverly Hills, 310-888-8618.

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**p.8** Christian Dior silk crepon herringbone-print dress and patent belt, \$4,800, select Christian Dior, 800-929-DIOR. Bulgari High Jewelry blue sapphire and diamond ring, price upon request, select Bulgari; bulgari.com. **p.10** Missoni pink leather woven bag, \$3,405, Missoni, Beverly Hills; missoni.com. Repossi orange zircon ring set in pink gold and brown diamonds, and green jade Indra necklace with diamonds and black gold, prices upon request, Repossi, Paris; repositi.com. Chanel Fine Jewelry gold San Marco ring with cultured-pearl center, price upon request, select Chanel Fine Jewelry, 800-500-0005. Dior Fine Jewelry citrine Miss Dior ring in yellow gold with diamonds, price upon request, select Dior Fine Jewelry, 800-929-DIOR. Miu Miu cream sunglasses, similar styles available, Miu Miu, Beverly Hills, 310-247-2227.

### C FASHION

**FINE TIME, p.43** Van Cleef & Arpels white-gold Hibiscus watch with mother-of-pearl inlay dial on round diamond bracelet, \$250,000, Van Cleef & Arpels, Costa Mesa, 714-545-9500. **JEWELRY BOX, p.50** De Beers diamond and platinum Aero cuff bracelet, \$380,000, De Beers, South Coast Plaza, 714-641-5820. Tiffany & Co. heart-shaped diamond earrings, \$2,350,000, Tiffany & Co., Beverly Hills, 310-273-8880. Tom Binns gold Bitten Heart brooch, \$115, Tom Binns Megastore, N.Y., tombinnsdesign.com. De Grisogono blue sapphire and diamond heart-shaped ring set in white gold, price upon request, De Grisogono, N.Y., 212-439-4220. Van Cleef & Arpels white mother-of-pearl and diamond Effeuillage ring, \$3,150, Van Cleef & Arpels, South Coast Plaza, 714-545-9500. Dior Fine Jewelry white gold with diamonds Cupidon ring, price upon request, select Dior Fine

## TOWER OF POWER

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leave the building. Most importantly, Griffin acted as a discerning gatekeeper, literally holding the keys to the castle. No one got into the El Royale without her approval, which was often won by unconventional means.

Producer Gary Ventimiglia remembers when his partner, David Weinberg, an attorney, walked into the El Royale off the street and found out William Travilla, the Oscar-winning costume designer who designed Marilyn Monroe’s billowing white halter dress in *The Seven Year Itch* had just died and his 10th-floor apartment was available. (It’s the same one where Cage locked his girlfriend out on the terrace.)

“I was away and he called me and said, ‘I saw this great apartment, you gotta call some-

Jewelry, 800-929-DIOR. Verdura faceted aquamarine and diamond Wrapped Heart brooch, \$55,000, Neiman Marcus, Beverly Hills; verdura.com. Jacob & Co. yellow-gold Link Chain necklace with two pavé diamond heart pendants, \$8,800, Jacob & Co., N.Y., 212-719-5887.

### BEACH BAUBLES

**p.84-85** Chanel white Luxo sunglasses, \$340, select Chanel; chanel.com. Van Cleef & Arpels turquoise, diamond and peridot Nour bracelet, price upon request, Van Cleef & Arpels, Costa Mesa, 714-545-9500. De Grisogono purple sapphire and diamond ring, price upon request, De Grisogono, N.Y., 212-439-4220. Repossi white-gold and diamond Moon ring set with button turquoise, price upon request, Repossi, Paris; repositi.com. **p.86** Hermès teak and leather deck chair, \$3,150, select Hermès, 800-441-4488. Chanel yellow jersey handbag, \$2,325, select Chanel; chanel.com. Repossi angel-skin coral necklace set with diamonds in pink gold, price upon request, Repossi, Paris; repositi.com. Cartier diamond and onyx Panthère de Cartier necklace, price upon request, Cartier, S.F., 415-397-3180. Harry Winston yellow sapphire and diamond necklace, price upon request, select Harry Winston; harrywinston.com. **p.87** Christian Louboutin ivory patent-leather cutout Fernando high heels, \$925, Christian Louboutin, West Hollywood, 310-247-9300; and platinum laminated Lolita Maxi canvas bag with gold-chain strap, \$995, select Foot Candy, 877-517-4606. Chanel Fine Jewelry white-gold San Marco brooch with South Sea pearl center, \$140,000, select Chanel Fine Jewelry, 800-500-0005. **p.88-89** See “Table of Contents.” **p.90** Bulgari green quartz and diamond Parentesi cocktail ring, \$7,900, select Bulgari; bulgari.com. Chanel Fine Jewelry white ceramic J12 watch with gold and diamond index, \$8,720, select Chanel Fine Jewelry, 800-500-0005. Christian Dior gold bikini, \$520, Christian Dior, Beverly Hills, 800-929-DIOR. **p.91** Dior Fine Jewelry citrine Incroyables et Merveilleuses Muguet ring, price upon request, select Dior Fine Jewelry, 800-929-DIOR. Hermès cotton beach towel, \$530, select Hermès, 800-441-4488. Missoni yellow Cabras bikini, \$395, Missoni, Beverly Hills; missoni.com. **p.92-93** Harry Winston ruby and diamond bracelet, price upon request, select Harry Winston;

body,” says Ventimiglia, who quickly asked Huvane to put in a good word. Then, Weinberg went to La Brea Bakery and asked the baker to make special cookies shaped like the El Royale, complete with neon-green frosting at the top. Within 20 minutes of the cookies being delivered to Griffin, they got a call from her. They were in, and they’re still there.

“I never had to advertise,” says Griffin about the 55 rental units she oversaw. “We always had a waiting list of people wanting in the building, but since Martha passed away, there’s been a feeling of uncertainty.”

As for Ventimiglia and the other residents of L.A.’s most famous apartment building, it’s the end of an era.

“The El Royale’s a lucky place for a lot of people,” says Ventimiglia. “It’s rare that anyone lived here and left without some kind of connection, and Sandy was that connection.” ●

harrywinston.com. De Grisogono amethyst, peridot, emerald, orange, pink and yellow sapphire earrings, price upon request, De Grisogono, N.Y., 212-439-4220. Boucheron gadrooned drop sapphire and yellow sapphire Zaia necklace, price upon request, Boucheron, S.F., 415-362-6020. Dior Fine Jewelry aquamarine Miss Dior ring, price upon request, select Dior Fine Jewelry, 800-929-DIOR. Chanel Fine Jewelry gold San Marco cuff with diamonds and pink, blue and red spinels, price upon request, select Chanel Fine Jewelry, 800-500-0005. Bulgari High Jewelry necklace with rubellites and peridots, price upon request, select Bulgari; bulgari.com.

### ESSENTIALLY ELLEN

**p.94-95** Bally silk georgette powder-colored tank, \$195, Bally, Beverly Hills, 310-271-3310. Stella McCartney blush silk shorts, \$585, Stella McCartney, L.A., 310-273-7051. Christian Louboutin nude patent-leather cutout Fernando high heels, \$925, Christian Louboutin, South Coast Plaza, 714-754-9200. Tiffany & Co. by Elsa Peretti yellow-gold Aegean necklace, \$13,500, Tiffany & Co., Beverly Hills, 310-273-8880. Verdura white-gold Criss Cross cuff, \$11,500, Neiman Marcus, Beverly Hills; verdura.com. **p.96** Alberta Ferretti white plissé silk V-neck dress, \$2,895, Alberta Ferretti, L.A., 310-652-9000. Bulgari High Jewelry pink-gold and mother-of-pearl Serpentine bracelet, price upon request, select Bulgari; bulgari.com. **p.98** Bottega Veneta canvas cotton silk dress, \$2,800, select Bottega Veneta, 877-362-1715. Bulgari High Jewelry peridot and diamond necklace, price upon request, select Bulgari; bulgari.com.

### CORRECTIONS

In the March 2010 Issue, “Center Stage” (p.140), the Mandarin Oriental Las Vegas’ address was misprinted. It is 3752 Las Vegas Blvd. South, Las Vegas, NV.

In the Weddings 2010 Issue, “About A Dress” (p.30), the square footage of Monique Lhuillier’s Melrose Place salon was misprinted. It is approximately 4,000 square feet.