

# WTSIH



## CHECK IT OUT

THE WORLD'S BEST FOOD, CHATSWORTH HOUSE, THE WHITBY, BREITLING IN SPACE, COMME DES GARÇONS AT THE MET, SUNNYLANDS + ACCESSORIES SPECIAL





The San Jacinto mountains loom behind Walter and Leonore Annenberg's Californian retreat, Sunnylands

TOM FERGUSON

On the cover

Photographer **James Cant**  
 Stylist **Ken Thompson**  
 Hair **James Pearce**  
 Grooming **Annette McKenzie**

Hugo Boss belted check wool trench coat, check wool suit, linen shirt, self print silk tie and leather laceups; Paul Smith cotton socks  
 Stockists page 97



**T**

his has never happened before," says our guide as we wait to start our tour of the historic house Sunnylands in Rancho Mirage, about 20 minutes from Palm Springs, California. Sunnylands, on 80 hectares of lush gardens in the middle of the Coachella Valley, was the winter home of

Leonore and Walter Annenberg, the billionaire publishing magnate and philanthropist. To say the house is rich in history would be an understatement.

Eight US presidents have stayed here; Barack Obama stayed eight times. The house, however, is more than just a presidential hangout, it's also a seminal work of architecture by one of southern California's leading mid-century modernist architects, A. Quincy Jones, with interiors by movie star-turned-interior designer William Haines.

To see the Annenberg's collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artworks, you'll need to travel to New York City, where you will find them on permanent display in the Annenberg rooms at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Walter Annenberg bequeathed the collection to The Met on his death and Leonore lived with digital prints of the artworks for her remaining years at Sunnylands, which is what hangs on the walls there today.

What's never happened before, according to our guide, is five no-shows for a seven-person tour. She's flummoxed. "I've been here since the house first opened to the public and I've never had people just not show up before." Tickets are released in monthly blocks on the 15<sup>th</sup> of every month at 9am Pacific Standard Time and they sell out within minutes,

which means you not only need to plan your visit but your ticket purchase in advance. To go through this manoeuvre and not show up – well, you'd need a pretty good reason.

Walter Annenberg died in 2002 and Leonore in 2009, and as part of their legacy they left the house to a trust and hoped that it might play a role in facilitating world peace and international agreement on issues such as poverty and global food security. You can read more about how Sunnylands is establishing itself as the "Camp David of the West" in our story, which starts on page 48.

A very different type of stately house is Chatsworth, home of the Cavendish family and the seat of the Duke of Devonshire since 1549. It is the venue and subject of the exhibition *House Style: Five Centuries of Fashion at Chatsworth*, which runs until October 22. Our London-based writer, Fiona McCarthy, travelled to Derbyshire to preview the exhibition of clothing, jewellery, artworks, family portraits and old letters which has been curated by Hamish Bowles, international editor-at-large at *American Vogue*. Fiona's story starts on page 38.

Our third house story in this edition is closer to home, in South Australia. The home of property heir and dog breeder David Roche opened to the public last year as a museum to display Roche's eccentric antique collection. Roche lived in the home in North Adelaide for 60 years until his death in 2013, amassing what is said to be one of the country's most valuable collections, worth an estimated \$80 million. *The Australian's* national arts writer, Michaela Boland, visited for WISH – her story starts on page 27.

I hope you enjoy the issue.

**David Meagher**  
 Editor

**WISH**

Editorial

Editor **David Meagher**  
 Art director **Samantha Yates**  
 Senior writer **Milanda Rout**  
 Sub-editor **Penny Durham**  
 Fashion director **Ken Thompson**  
 Picture editor **Christine Westwood**  
 Digital design lead **Alex Chidgey**  
 Junior digital designer **Isabel Trujillo**  
 GPO Box 4245, Sydney 2001  
 Phone (02) 9288 3000

Advertising

Commercial manager **Cody Pearson**  
 (02) 9288 2791  
 Production and imaging **NSW PreMedia**

**NB** Unsolicited manuscripts will not be considered.  
 Printed by PMP Print,  
 31 Heathcote Road, Moorebank 2170, for the proprietor and  
 publisher, Nationwide News Pty Limited (ACN 008 438 828),  
 of 2 Holt Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010, for insertion in  
*The Australian* on May 5, 2017

# PLACE IN THE SUN

A PUBLISHING MAGNATE'S WINTER RETREAT IN CALIFORNIA SOON BECAME NOT JUST A PLAYGROUND FOR THE ROYAL, RICH AND GLAMOROUS, BUT THE UNOFFICIAL CAMP DAVID OF THE WEST, WHERE PRESIDENTS AND OTHER WORLD LEADERS COULD PAUSE TO PONDER THE MOST PRESSING QUESTIONS OF THEIR DAY.



STORY **DAVID MEAGHER**

Two views of the Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands at Rancho Mirage in southern California, by mid-century modernist architect A. Quincy Jones



**T**here is really nothing else like Sunnylands in all of the United States of America. The pink-hued home built in 1966 in Rancho Mirage, California, for the billionaire Philadelphia publishing magnate and philanthropist Walter Annenberg and his wife Leonore, has hosted eight US presidents. The first was Dwight D. Eisenhower; Barack Obama stayed eight times; Ronald and Nancy Reagan celebrated New Year's Eve here with legendary parties 18 times; it's where Richard Nixon (who made Annenberg ambassador to Britain from 1969 to 1974) sought refuge when he resigned in disgrace in August 1974. Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip have stayed here, as have various other European royals. Margaret Thatcher, Princess Grace of Monaco, Frank Sinatra, James Stewart, Bob Hope, Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers and Gregory Peck all enjoyed the hospitality that the Annenbergs were famous for.

Sunnylands was the couple's much loved winter retreat, but it wasn't just the stream of high-profile visitors that made it so extraordinary. Designed by the prominent southern Californian architect A. Quincy Jones, with interiors by movie star-turned-designer William Haines, the house is the pinnacle of mid-century Modernist style. It is one of the great monumental American family houses, alongside The Breakers in Newport, Rhode Island, built by Cornelius Vanderbilt II; Kykuit in Westchester, New York, by John D. Rockefeller; and the Hearst Castle in San Simeon, California, by William Randolph Hearst.

Sunnylands, however, stands out from the rest and occupies a unique place in the nation's social, political and architectural history. As Bob Colacello wrote in *Vanity Fair* in 2012: "It's hard to think of another American private house where so many important people came together to socialise, exchange ideas, and influence one another in a totally secluded and relaxed atmosphere. Or, for that matter, of another American couple who possessed the wealth, connections and will to make that happen."

Walter Annenberg died in 2002 and Leonore in 2009, but the couple had established a trust in 2001 that

would safeguard the next, and arguably most ambitious, phase of life at Sunnylands.

The Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands, as it is now known, was endowed with \$US300 million by the Annenbergs along with a mission statement detailing the types of programs for which the retreat may be used. Since 2012 the house, a 20-minute drive from Palm Springs, has been open to the public through guided tours (they run from September to May and book out well in advance). It was also envisioned that the estate be available as a sanctuary for generations of high-level national and world leaders seeking the privacy and "the pause" needed for solving the most pressing national and international issues. The Annenbergs' wish was that the house would become a sort of Camp David (the official country retreat of the US president in Maryland, 100km northwest of Washington DC) of the West.

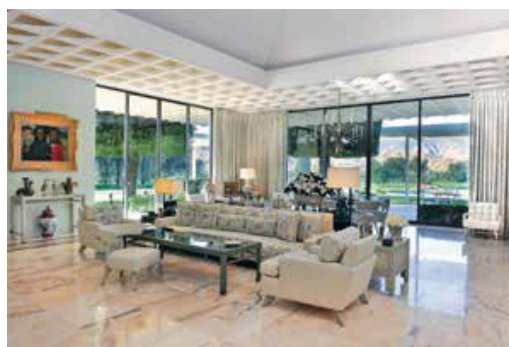
David Lane, a former high level diplomat and staffer in the Clinton and Obama administrations, has been president of the Annenberg Foundation Trust since September last year. The trust's board is limited to Walter and Leonore's descendants – each had two children each from previous marriages, but none together – but it is the president of the trust who is charged with driving Sunnylands' ambitious vision.

"When the first president of Sunnylands, Geoffrey Cowan, came to see me I was working in the White House in the Obama administration, and he said, 'We want to make this estate the Camp David of the West'. I don't think I actually said 'fat chance' but I did say that I couldn't imagine the president of the United States using this place in California," says Lane. It didn't take long for him to be proved wrong. "I went off to Italy for almost five years [as US ambassador to the United Nations Agencies in Rome] and while I was gone President Obama used Sunnylands multiple times to host major summits, and a few other times as well, so the place was kind of on the map as somewhere presidents and secretaries of state can convene around a foreign policy purpose. So I thought it had great potential to bring people together across ideological boundaries, especially at a time when our political system so desperately needs a reset."

Obama was a prolific user of Sunnylands, perhaps

TOM FERGUSON X2

Anti-clockwise from main: two views of the central atrium with a bronze by Rodin, prints of the original works by Gauguin, Van Gogh, Renoir and Matisse, and original furniture designs by William Haines; the master bedroom; the Peach guest room



“This place clearly has a non-partisan mandate – presidents of both parties have been here over the years.”

going to be open to the administration but there are other sources of continuity in our government beyond just the president.”

According to Lane, the mandate set down in the deed of trust stipulates that Sunnylands should be used to “promote world peace and facilitate international agreement”. A challenging enough brief; yet there is a further tranche of work that Sunnylands will be engaging with under its new president.

Between jobs in the Clinton and Obama administrations Lane worked for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, responsible for the organisation’s advocacy and public policy work on a range of matters including global development and global health; later he served as president and CEO of the One campaign, co-founded by Bono from U2, to fight extreme poverty and preventable diseases.

“So the trustees have urged me to build on my own experiences and relationships and promote global health and food security, with a special emphasis on fragile developing countries,” says Lane. “We are also going to be doing more work on the congressional side of politics, which gets to the more philosophical vision I have for Sunnylands. If you follow US politics you’ll know how dysfunctional our system is right now and has been for some time. I see this place as very clearly having a non-partisan mandate – presidents of both parties have been here over the years.”

“I think the greatest challenge facing our country – which is why taking the job was appealing to me – is the incredible divides we have. Partisan divides, geographic divides, divides between practitioners and theorists or academics – and based on past experience I think that is where we can also make a difference. The estate is a little bit secluded, it’s kind of a transforming environment when you’re sitting there looking at the mountains. And our hope is that when people gather there, outside of Washington, they are more willing to lay down their arms and set aside pre-existing biases and maybe work across the aisle. We want to be that place.”

Walter Annenberg described himself as an “independent Republican”. In the 1952 election he supported the Eisenhower/Nixon ticket. In 1964 he endorsed Democrat Lyndon B. Johnson for president and in 1968 he switched back to supporting Nixon.

His considerable wealth came from publishing. After his father Moses’ death in 1942 Walter inherited a newspaper business that included the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. He set about buying additional print media businesses as well as regional radio and television stations. In 1952 he created *TV Guide* which, at its height in the 1970s, sold more than a billion copies a year and was thought to be making almost \$US1 million a week in profit. He also created *Seventeen* magazine. In 1988 he sold his business, Triangle Publications, to News Corporation for \$US3 billion, a record price for a media deal at the time. After the sale Annenberg focused his efforts on his philanthropic work. During his lifetime it is estimated the Annenberg donated more than \$US2 billion to a range of causes and there are several libraries, theatres, hospitals and museums across the US that now bear the Annenberg name.

most notably in 2013 to host a summit with President Xi Jinping of China – it became known as a “shirtsleeves summit” as the two men spent time strolling the grounds at Sunnylands jacketless. It was there that the two countries announced agreements on greenhouse gases and climate change. In 2014 Obama discussed peace in the Middle East and the civil war in Syria with King Abdullah of Jordan. Then in 2016 he used Sunnylands to host the ASEAN summit. Before him, as well as using Sunnylands as an escape from Washington, Reagan occasionally brought members of his cabinet with him to discuss government business. In 1988 Reagan signed the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement at Sunnylands.

What use Donald Trump will make use of Sunnylands remains to be seen – he seems to prefer his

own estate, Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Florida. (Mar-a-Lago, as it happens, was built in 1927 by the General Foods heiress Marjorie Merriweather Post. She envisioned it as a winter retreat for presidents and bequeathed it to the nation on her death in 1973, but successive US presidents declined to use it. The property reverted to Post’s estate in 1980 and was bought by Trump in 1985).

“We are certainly open to it [working with Trump] but not depending on it,” Lane says. “We are working with members of the administration and engaging with them but I’m trying not to be breathless about focusing on the president at this point. I would imagine that when presidents feel inclined to come and use Sunnylands it will be most naturally in the Asia-Pacific realm given our geographic location. We are always

“I think the Annenbergs noticed that it was a place where people behaved a little differently.”

Swanson, as well as movie mogul Jack Warner, until his death in 1973. Haines also redesigned the US embassy in London, Winfield House, ahead of the Annenbergs' residency there from 1969 to 1974.

In the huge and potentially austere spaces that Jones created at Sunnylands, Haines, working with designer Ted Graber created a bright, inviting home. He humanised the grand scale of the house by arranging small seating groups of comfortable sofas and chairs of his own design (a Haines signature was low sofas and chairs that he thought allowed women to perch perfectly) throughout the house. The master bedroom is a vision in yellow that today, according to the trust laid out by the Annenbergs, is only to be used by POTUS or other heads of state. Most guests to Sunnylands would stay in one of the “coloured” rooms: housed in an adjacent wing to the main house, these guest rooms are almost identically decorated except for their colour schemes of peach, green, blue, yellow or pink. Leonore Annenberg's attention to detail was so exacting that even the jelly beans in the guest rooms were chosen to match the décor. George H.W. Bush's favourite was the green room due to its proximity to one of the estate's many lakes, where he would go fishing in the morning.

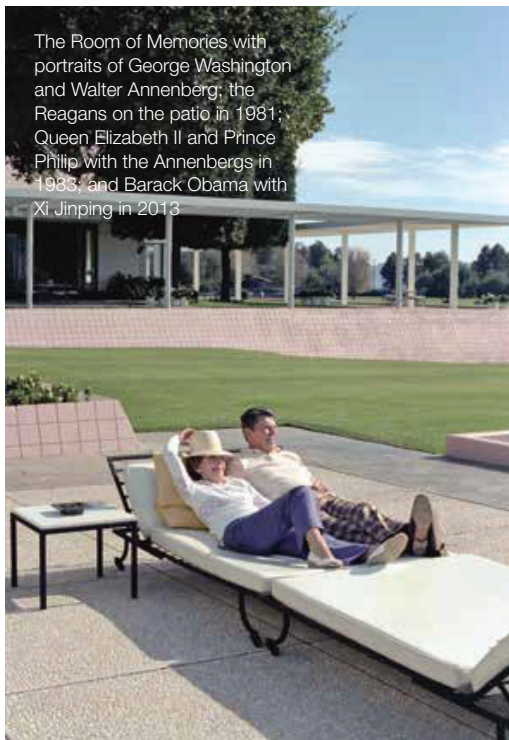
The 2300sqm single-level house is designed around a large central atrium/living room that has at its centre a bronze sculpture, *Eve*, by Rodin. The sculpture is still in place today but the Annenbergs' vast collection of Impressionist and post-Impressionist artworks was removed after Walter's death and gifted to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The collection includes works by Monet, Degas, Cézanne, Van Gogh and Renoir and is said to have been worth more than \$US1 billion at the time of the bequest – the single biggest gift to the Metropolitan Museum in its history. Digital prints of the paintings now hang where the originals once were so that visitors can get a sense of what the house looked like when the Annenbergs lived there.

It took deep pockets and an even deeper ambition to create Sunnylands both as a place and an institution. The US still has vast individual fortunes and families with a strong philanthropic drive; but Sunnylands is a reflection of a particular moment and ambition in American architecture, interior design and social and political history.

“Sunnylands is a pretty extraordinary gift in addition to the Annenbergs' wealth and their art,” says Lane. “I think the Annenbergs themselves noticed that the setting itself would be able to contribute something, that it was a place where people behaved a little bit differently.” Lane says the challenge is to be true to the Annenberg's original vision, as laid down in the deed of trust, without being a prisoner of it. “I was talking to one of Walter's friends about it and I said, I really think this question of fragile states and global poverty is a space where we can make a difference. I feel like the education reform space – something Walter Annenberg was very passionate about – is very crowded and I don't see what value we can add at this moment in time. And he assured me what they would have cared more about than anything else is being relevant to their time.” **W**



The Room of Memories with portraits of George Washington and Walter Annenberg; the Reagans on the patio in 1981; Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip with the Annenbergs in 1983, and Barack Obama with Xi Jinping in 2013.



In 1963 when Walter and Leonore Annenberg bought the 80-hectare parcel of land in Rancho Mirage, it was desert scrubland. It took three years to complete the landscaping and building works of the estate, which as well as the main house includes three small cottages also designed by A. Quincy Jones. Leonore wanted the main house to have a “Mayan”-style roof; apart from that, the house is considered to be typical of Jones' architectural style: a main structure integrated into the landscape and surrounded by greenery, the use of new materials and construction techniques, an informal outdoor-oriented open-plan design and large walls of glass. The Annenbergs made small changes to the house over the years, one being the remodelling of a room originally designed for Walter's mother, who died before the house was completed. The room, now called the

Room of Memories, was transformed in 1977 into an informal library. Today, decorated in a coral colour scheme, it is filled with framed photographs, correspondence and memorabilia that tell the story of the Annenberg family. One wall is filled with framed Christmas cards to the Annenbergs from the Queen Mother from 1972 to 2001.

Sunnylands is the only extant preserved interior by William Haines, considered one of the greatest American interior designers of the period, that is open to the public. Haines was a successful film star and one of the first openly gay actors in Hollywood. In 1935 after acting in almost 50 movies Haines quit show business and went into interior design. Given his Hollywood connections he went on to become the designer of choice for movie stars such as Joan Crawford, Carole Lombard and Gloria