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New Horizons

Remodeling her Beverly Hills abode helped the homeowner find her voice in both design and life.

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Interior Design: Andrea Michaelson,
Andrea Michaelson Design





In the living room of this Beverly Hills home, interior designer Andrea Michaelson commissioned a brass frame by Gilad Ben-Artzi for the fireplace surround of Silver Wave marble from Stoneland USA. Above is a work by Amir Zaki flanked by a pair of Gentner lights. Coffee tables by Cassoni rest on a hand-knotted silk rug from Decorative Carpets by Stark. The oak plank flooring is from Tridentum.

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esthetic preference is as individual as a fingerprint, which can make sharing a home an exercise in stylistic compromise. Living by yourself means doing away with such accommodations and letting personal expression shine.

That was the case for Anne Emerich Palmer, who—newly single—set out to put her stamp on a place of her own.

Anne was drawn to this 1930s Beverly Hills dwelling by its sophisticated but livable nature—something of a hallmark of its original architect, the legendary Paul R. Williams. While the home's bones had stood the test of time, more recent changes had rendered it “safe and expected,” observes its new owner. Safe and expected wouldn't do for this client, says Andrea Michaelson, the interior designer Anne commissioned to help her reimagine the home. “She is a person who knows what she likes. And she has a great appreciation for the fine points of design.”

Michaelson would know, given their history, the two having worked together when Anne was married. One of those homes was populated with 18th-century art and furniture, but Anne's style “is colorful, edited, fun and sophisticated,” says the interior designer. “Her taste was a strong filter for the environment, with much trust put in my judgment.”

The first step was to begin removing the dark floors and trim. “At some point, the floors had been ebonized, and the ceilings and beams were very dark,” says Michaelson. “Installing lighter wood planks and painting the ceilings brightened everything.” With fresh backgrounds established, the pair began to play with the pieces that fill the spaces. In this home, each element stands alone like a star in its own right. “My philosophy is that if you love every object, it should hold its own,” observes Michaelson, “and the addition of it in the room should only add to the space's overall aesthetic.”

With this idea as the litmus test, rooms are not assembled by a common theme or period, “but by space, scale and orientation as well as how Anne wanted to use them and that she be delighted by everything we added over time, not all at

once,” explains Michaelson. For example, in the living room, contemporary sofas and armchairs live with a vintage gilded console and a pair of antique French architectural panels. The modern artworks, including a large black-and-white painting by Squeak Carnwath, reflect the owner's passion for collecting California artists. “It's my way of honoring the state that's welcomed me for 30 years,” says Anne, a native of France. The room also illustrates another thread in the house: No feature is too small to be considered. Michaelson says that the living room's fireplace surround, a simple raw granite slab, was fine, but thought a brass frame could elevate it. “For Andrea, God is truly in the details,” notes Anne.

With its enveloping custom color, the library is a place for the owner to withdraw with a good book and a cup of tea. A cozy paneled room is the very definition of traditional, but, once again, the expected is upended with features like a coffee table with a Brutalist nature, a Karl Benjamin painting hanging above the mantel, and a 6-foot-tall sculpture of a yellow pencil by Speziari Fabiano ironically emblazoned with the phrase “Ceci n'est pas un crayon,” or “this is not a pencil.” The table is a creation that grew out of a search for a powder room vanity. “I was visiting a slab yard and saw the block with the graffiti number for tracking,” recalls the interior designer. She ended up going a different route. “But, when we were looking for a coffee table for the library, one of my suggestions was to fabricate a more interesting piece and use the smaller block, along with glass. Anne loved the idea and went for it. Trust here was a big factor.”

That trust and vision are also on display in the main bedroom, where Michaelson enlivened walls by installing squares of hand-painted silk in six different colors in the frame-like molding. “We could have selected just one color, but things are so much more interesting this way,” she says.

But perhaps the most compelling aspect of the project was the change the designer saw in her client. “Witnessing Anne finding her design voice was an awesome experience,” Michaelson says. Her client agrees, adding, “It was a stimulating and emancipating experience. It's a thrill to be the captain of one's ship.” **L**

The pieces in the living room are both old and new, including a pair of antique French panels hanging over a gilded console from Soniat House Antiques in New Orleans and a contemporary console by Lukas Geronimas. Fortuny wool dresses the Dana John sofas; the chairs are by Hermès. Michaelson hung a Dougall Paulson weaving and a Squeak Carnwath work in the space.





Above: In the entry, 38 pieces of oxidized brass compose a bench by Riccardo Goti. The interior designer says the piece is the perfect blend of beauty and function and knew it would be a great fit when she spotted it at an art fair. Michaelson worked with general contractor JP's Remodeling Home Improvement Services on the project.

Opposite: A painting by Ed Moses, purchased through William Turner Gallery, holds pride of place in the home's grand stairwell. A wool-and-linen runner by Marc Phillips covers the stairs, and a vintage Gothic Revival pendant purchased at Blackman Cruz suspends above.

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A custom Farrow & Ball hue defines the library’s paneling. In a room that could read traditional, Michaelson took it in a fresh direction with the addition of a coffee table made of a stone block from Stoneland USA and glass from Sky Glass Custom Mirror and Antique, an oversize pencil sculpture by Speziari Fabiano, a Karl Benjamin painting, and a Swedish-inspired carpet by Marc Phillips. The armchairs are the client’s existing pieces.



Above: In the main bedroom, the interior designer chose to fill the wall panels with hand-painted silk by Ruth Jacobsen. The geometric chairs and ottomans in a Pierre Frey fabric hail from The Future Perfect. Between the arrangement is a vintage table from Susanne Hollis. The rug is by Commune for Christopher Farr; the 18th-century console is from Richard Shapiro Studiolo.

Opposite: A silk-wrapped iron light fixture by H el ene Aumont from Una Malan commands attention in the main bedroom. The bed from Design Within Reach, dressed with linens from Garde, is bookended by swing-arm lights by Dimore Studio. The framed artwork above the headboard is by iLia Fresco (Anossov).





Above: Michaelson took on the landscape design as well as the interiors on this project. A sheltered seating area provides the perfect spot for an alfresco dining room. The metal-and-wood table and benches by Extremis are from In-Ex.

Opposite: Part of the endeavor involved relocating and reshaping the swimming pool, in concert with Abstract Pool Designs, to better relate it to the house. Michaelson used tile from Ann Sacks. The seating is by Roda from Niche Beverly, and the umbrella is by Sunbeam Jackie.