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Spring 2021

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FRESHGLITZ of BelAir



A RENOVATION TRANSFORMS
A ROUGH-AROUND-THE-EDGES
COLONIAL HOME INTO AN
L.A. SOPHISTICATE

WRITTEN BY SALLY FINDER WEEPIE PHOTOGRAPHY BY KARYN MILLET



Ever a house was in need of a magnanimous benefactor, this one was it. A 1930s Colonial-style builder's house deflated by a bad remodel, the structure felt like an awkward interloper in the refined Bel Air neighborhood of Los Angeles—until a young couple with an eye for great potential and an exceptional design team stepped in.

"It started off as a pragmatic remodel," architect Erik Evens says. "Then it got a whole lot more interesting." A modest plan to update the kitchen, bath, and master suite—and bring more utility to the backyard—morphed into a sledgehammer-fueled, wall-toppling renovation. "We ended up completely reinventing the house," Evens says.

The biggest change appears just a step inside the front door where a small entry and hall had opened to a dining area. Evens and interior designer Windsor Smith took down walls that had confined the space to mediocrity. "We blew it all out," Evens says, "and made the entire area a flowing center hall."

Elegant gray checkerboard tile leads the eye through the house from front to back, past a seating area anchored by a baby grand piano and out to the garden and fireplace-warmed patio beyond. "I've always loved walking into a center hall as a true living space," Smith says. "I like how the piano resides here among clusters of eclectic seating. It feels like a quaint boutique hotel lobby—perfect for predinner cocktails or after-dinner scotch."

The light, graceful entry with its molding-clad arched doorways also acts as a picture frame for an even more dramatic scene: the lapis-blue dining room. "Standing in the foyer and looking into the dining room is a surreal moment," Evens says.

Dining room Book-matched Arabescato marble slabs top a custom table that's ringed by tufted seats upholstered in luxe silk velvet. **Exterior** Architect Erik Evens respected the home's early-20th-century architecture while elevating the entry's presence with grand columns. **Previous pages** Transom windows add light and character to the entry where wainscoting and paneled walls speak to timeless elegance. Arched doorways amplify the impact of room-to-room views, particularly from the airy entry hall to the deep and dazzling dining area.

Entry hall Gray and white provide a neutral backdrop for the homeowners' collection of traditional and modern art. Designer Windsor Smith's sophisticated furnishing picks include an Austrian Regency console, a Georgian mirror, Directoire chairs, and an English turned-arm sofa.





Once a seldom-used formal living room, the new dining space captivates as the jewel of the home. Its color celebrates the feminine half of the young couple who now own this home. “Her eyes are the bluest I’ve ever seen, and I knew this was the perfect place for her to reign over dinner parties,” Smith says.

A lacquered ceiling, drenched in the same deep blue as the walls, reflects windows, making them look as if they are stacked to a grand height. “The reflection became the room’s doppelgänger,” Smith says. “It gives a sense that you are underwater looking up at the world above—a pretty dreamy experience.”

Serving the dining space, a reimagined kitchen pairs raised-panel cabinetry painted an elegant gray with heavily veined white statuarietto marble and a mix of brass and pewter hardware. “It’s a gourmet kitchen that walks the line between traditional design and the open, modern lifestyle,” Evens says.

Through a beefy archway, the kitchen connects to a new wing that Evens was able to add to the house by redefining the sloped lot. A seagrass-wrapped breakfast area and family room offer casual gathering space for the young family.

Evens’ transformation of the lot, which is flat at the street and climbs steeply up a hillside, also gave the homeowners new places to relax in the California sun. “The yard was mostly

Kitchen Cabinets coated in Fine Paints of Europe “Baltic Gray” set a tailored tone for the kitchen. Smith took inspiration from the 1970s in designing the distinctive bar stools, while the small white mosaic floor tile, she says, “also feels nostalgic—like New York City’s Pastis bistro in the early years.” A brass faucet echoes the chandelier in the breakfast area, where Smith created a collected feel with mismatched dining chairs and a custom campaign-style table.



Library Deep color—hunter green tinged with gray—cocoon the cozy library, a room with petite proportions that Smith loves. “It reminds you that you are in the nostalgic part of Bel Air with the Hotel Bel-Air a stone’s throw away,” she says. “The bar and original brick fireplace feel Old Hollywood, and with the homeowner being a financier, the reclaimed bronze chandelier from a turn-of-the-century bank also seems fitting.”



Master bedroom A gray-and-white palette sets a serene mood in this sanctuary space. A curved sofa plays up the room's feminine flair.

Master bath Marble tile in a herringbone pattern provides an elegant base for the vanity and tub areas, both set off like artwork by the doorways' prodigious moldings.



WHEN WE REDO TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE, WE MAKE SURE IT WORKS FOR A MODERN LIFESTYLE.”

—architect Erik Evens





“unusable before the renovation,” he says. “We terraced it into a series of inviting garden areas.”

A pool with pergola-shaded seating sprawls out on the main terrace while the reworked master suite opens to a sun-drenched upper terrace. “Where better to have your morning’s first coffee?” Smith says.

The designer gave private spaces a luxe attitude, appointing the vaulted bedroom with a chic low-slung bed and curved sofa upholstered in soft mohair. The master bath, now graciously scaled, features tub and vanity areas framed by thoughtful architectural details.

“Baths in the 1930s were tiny—they weren’t intended to spend a lot of time in,” Evens says. “Now they’re a sanctuary, a place to rejuvenate. I love the view of this bath through the arched doorway. It feels theatrical. The tub is like a piece of sculpture.”

Throughout the home, Evens and Smith were careful to blend classic elegance with fresh energy that befits its inhabitants. This prince of a house has found its best self.

“In the end,” Evens says, “it was all about using the language of traditional architecture to say something beautiful and relevant about how we live today.”

Interior designer: Windsor Smith Architect: Erik Evens

For more information, see sources on page 94

Outdoor areas Doric columns on the pergola give the pool terrace grandeur—and create amazing reflections. Smith chose relaxed seating for the pool and more traditional options for the patio, which is warmed by an outdoor fireplace.



ALTHOUGH THE HOMEOWNERS
ARE YOUNG, THEY WANTED A
CLASSIC HOME WITH
MEMORABLE DETAILS.”

—architect Erik Evens