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EYES





OPPOSITE: Clean-lined Italian seating around a vintage 1970s glass coffee table makes the living room a magnet for conversation.

ABOVE: A fish tank in the living room wall was reframed in warm wood, and the carpeted staircase became a concrete stairwell with stepped pedestals for display. LEFT: The maple floor in the living room reflects sunlight that pours through the expansive glass walls.

Written by CARA GREENBERG Photography by MARK LOHMAN Field editor: LAURA HULL

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rowing up in a house filled with tufted upholstery and floral prints, Linda Otto learned that kind of decor didn't suit her. "I didn't know what my own taste was, but I knew that wasn't it," she says.

Now retired from the film business, she is a woman of very definite tastes, and the crisp, tailored, modern Beverly Hills house she bought three years ago with her husband, Alan Landsburg, proves it.

Even though floor-to-ceiling windows admit abundant sunlight throughout the now-7,500-square-foot house, at time of purchase the home needed a little help to take away the chill. The house began life as "a typical California U-shape ranch built around a swimming pool," Linda says. Previous owners had added a second level in the 1980s and clad the entire structure in white plaster for a sleek Bauhaus look.

For their previous residence, a Malibu beach house, Linda and Alan had enlisted the help of interior designer Sandy Davidson, who exploited



the natural warmth of wood in custom-designed built-ins. "It was luscious," Linda says, "and I learned a lot."

Davidson's game plan for the new house called for "clean lines and uncrowded spaces," says Alan, who chairs the California Horse Racing Board. However, the couple also wanted their home to be, in Linda's words, "warm, comfortable, and easy on the eyes."

To reconcile the need for clean lines with the desire for a cozy feel, Davidson brought in wood wherever possible, even replacing the icy stainless-steel surround of the in-wall saltwater aquarium in the living room with a white birch and mahogany frame. Warmth now emanates throughout several rooms from gleaming hardwood floors and extensive white-birch



LEFT: The exterior of Linda Otto and Alan Landsburg's house sports high-tech details such as stainless-steel garage doors and glass brick trim. BELOW: The dramatic black glass wall in the dining room is original to the house. Flagstone covers a concrete wall on the patio. OPPOSITE: Pale aqua chairs in the kitchen add a rare touch of color.





Alan and Linda wanted their home to feel clean-lined and uncrowded and to be “warm, comfortable, and easy on the eyes,” Linda says.

bookshelves and cabinetry, all custom-designed by Davidson. Each piece received a coat of sealer to make the grain more subtle, then was stained the color of golden oak.

“This was not a major renovation; it was a ‘spiff up,’” Davidson says. Major changes were few, including replacing institutional-looking railings on terraces and decks, resurfacing the formerly carpeted living room staircase in terracotta-color concrete, and adding a hot tub on a deck outside the master bedroom. The trio also disguised an unsightly concrete wall outside the

dining room with flagstone, topped the garden wall with glass brick to tie it into existing facade details, and planted bamboo and tropical plants to obscure the view of the house next door.

A large part of the remodeling job hinged on the purchase of new furniture. “Linda likes stark, modern furniture and appreciates high-quality design,” Davidson says. For example, in the living room, contemporary Italian seating pieces set the standard for sophistication.

“I wanted something more interesting than two couches with a table in the middle,” Linda



LEFT: A large contemporary desk provides abundant work space in Linda's office. BELOW: Existing stainless-steel panels were left above the fireplace in the home office, an inviting space where family tends to gather. OPPOSITE: A view of the pool and a large-screen TV draw the couple's grandchildren to the office, where they like to keep Linda company while she works.



RIGHT: Interior designer Sandy Davidson (in her signature white sailor hat) confers with Linda and Alan by the pool. BELOW: In the master bedroom, sliding glass doors display a sweeping view of Los Angeles. OPPOSITE: The master bedroom's lower level provides a sunken "reading pit," with a hot tub just outside. George Nelson's 1950s slat bench adds a touch of classic midcentury design.





says. Davidson purchased four modular upholstered seating pieces, two straight ones and two curved, which can be configured as a single unit or in varying combinations. Arrayed around the fireplace, "they work really well for conversation," Linda says. Such classic mid-20th-century designs as Eileen Gray's 1930s chrome-and-cream leather chairs and Joe D'Urso's glass coffee table on oversize casters, an icon of the high-tech era, augment the main seating pieces.

The almost complete absence of color in the house is key to the aura of serenity. "Every time we discussed color, I realized that was not what I wanted," Linda says. "I feel uncomfortable when I bring in too much color."

Also vital to the success of the overall scheme

was the right lighting. "Overhead lighting can be unflattering," Davidson says, "so I make certain everything is on dimmers." To complement existing recessed ceiling lighting, she provided a frosted-glass columnar torchère near the living room fireplace and egg-shape table lamps, which create a spectacular nighttime glow.

In Linda's home office, Davidson custom-designed new wood cabinetry to house equipment for film editing. Linda's profession turned hobby, and at the opposite end of the room, a TV wall unit so Linda, an avid sports fan, can watch tennis and basketball from her desk. All the built-ins contain lighting, which spotlights particular objects and provides soothing indirect lighting for the whole room. "My study is the place where everybody comes to lounge, watch TV, and sit by the fire in winter," Linda says.

The upshot of the remodeling efforts is a house that's spare and uncluttered but welcoming and usable. With seven grandchildren who visit frequently, "there's no room where I have to say to the kids, 'Don't go in there,'" Linda says. "And that's exactly what I wanted." □

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