

VIEW FINDER

RECASTING THE RESIDENCE WITH COMPELLING ARTWORK
AND FURNISHINGS, A BEL-AIR HOME'S MAKEOVER
IS AS BOLD AS THE SITE'S SWEEPING VIEWS.

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Designer Kristine Paige Kamenstein revamped the staircase in a Bel-Air home, giving it a contemporary, less-formal look and paired it with furnishings with an organic feel. The Jiun Ho table from Thomas Lavin rests on a rug by Anthony Monaco Carpet & Textile Design. The stair runner is by The Rug Company.



If real estate is all about location, then the Bel-Air house designer Kristine Paige Kamenstein's clients found overlooking Los Angeles and the Pacific Ocean had everything going for it—with one caveat. "It was too traditional for them," the designer recalls of the ornate detailing. "It needed to be stripped down and built back up." The owners, who were moving from a 1920s Colonial-style home, acted in kind. They sold all their furnishings to start anew, giving Kamenstein free range to infuse the house with their now-modern sensibilities.

First, though, the fireplaces had to go. The house had six of them—"massive fireplaces that wiped out most of the view," says general contractor Paul McNulty, who worked with architect Tara Moore on revamping the interior architecture. Four of them—a double unit facing the family room and outside terrace, one in the master bedroom and another in the living room—stole the focus from the cityscape and the ocean. McNulty replaced all of them with French doors to clear the sight lines. "Just picking up that view is a nice 'wow' factor," he says.

Kamenstein then swapped out the formal marble floor in the grand foyer, replacing it with the same French oak that runs through the rest of house. She also streamlined the existing Victorian-influenced staircase, banished a bar in the family room and carved out a foyer for the master suite. Another thing, the designer says: "We took out every single light fixture."

For a more contemporary feel, Kamenstein covered the walls and trim in shades of white and gray and accented spaces with black and white notes, along with bursts of teal and red. "We wanted a palette that didn't fight the interior architecture but complemented it," the designer says. That method gave her a clean canvas for grand gestures such as the hand-painted wallcovering by Porter Teleo in the dining room featuring bright splotches of color on an inky background. It grabs the attention of anyone who steps into the adjacent foyer. "Immediately, it's a talking piece," the wife says, noting happily that everyone has an opinion. "It's polarizing!" The designer avoided extraneous details in the rest of the room, where the family spends time playing games and working on puzzles in addition to sharing meals. "Because the wallpaper is so artistic and creative, we wanted clean lines in the furniture and the light fixtures," she says.

Similar forces are at work in the sloped-ceiling master suite, where Kamenstein used another Porter Teleo pattern on an accent wall behind the custom four-poster bed. "I chose to emphasize the shorter wall in the room because the ceilings are so high. This brought down the scale and helped make the room feel more intimate," she says of the Rorschach-like design. The ceiling then rises to a peak over the Deco-inspired seating area, done in quiet tones of

black, white and gray and furnished with sinuous antique Czech armchairs and a Jean-Michel Frank-style sofa.

Kamenstein used varying degrees of teal to connect the spaces on the open-plan first floor. A deep-peacock suede on the chairs in the office is visible from the foyer, and a similar shade appears in the mohair covering the living room sofa spied at the end of a barrel-vaulted corridor. Lighter robin's-egg wool covers the sectional in the family room, and beyond the French doors, yet another shade covers the accent pillows scattered on outdoor furnishings in the lush gardens, which were the work of Cheryl Kellough of Sage Garden Design, and, later, Alfonso Paez of Paez Landscape. "It's a progression of hues," Kamenstein says, so while each space speaks its own language, there's a smooth transition from one to another. Not to be forgotten, however, is the red element of the design's palette, which proudly asserts itself in the sea urchin-form pendant light over the kitchen's breakfast area and in the starburst pattern on the main stair runner.

Once the interiors were complete, Kamenstein called on art consultant Paul Rusconi to add another layer to the rooms. He added to the husband's small but important collection of black-and-white photography and helped select large statement-making pieces, including Massimo Vitali's huge photograph of Coney Island in the living room—a nod to the owners' family outings there when they lived in New York. There's also a custom, graffiti-like painting in the foyer by Mr. Brainwash. "It's what the house needed, I think, to not be so serious," the wife says. As for Rusconi's other selections, which include his own pointillist-style painting of a hummingbird depicted with nail polish on acrylic in the master bedroom, "they were like icing for me," the wife says, noting that she and her husband had never amassed a serious art collection before. "It was like magic." ■

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Silk mohair by Coraggio covers a custom sofa from Gina Berschneider in the living room. The curves continue with Tom Dixon wingback chairs from Twentieth and a Holly Hunt coffee table. Underfoot is a carpet from The Rug Company, and hovering above the grouping is a Lindsey Adelman chandelier. A vintage tripod lamp from Modern Vault and a Kelly Wearstler floor lamp supply more light. Rosemary Hallgarten fabric makes up the draperies, fabricated by Casabella For You. The photograph is by Massimo Vitali.



Above: In the kitchen's breakfast nook, a Jean de Merry pendant is one of the red elements that pop up throughout the house, as is the Innovations faux leather on the banquette. Facing the Saarinen table from Design Within Reach are Tom Dixon chairs from Twentieth.

Right: The owners wanted to keep the existing white cabinetry, tile and countertops, but Kamenstein added her own stamp with new cabinet hardware from Ferguson and a hemp wallcovering by Phillip Jeffries. The Mater stools by Space Copenhagen are from Twentieth, and the pendants are by The Urban Electric Co.



Porter Teleo's Floral Graffiti wallpaper from David Sutherland takes center stage in the dining room. Besides the Luteca console and table, the space is also outfitted with a Roll & Hill chandelier, Apparatus sconces and midcentury chairs from Benjamin Wilson Antiques via 1stdibs. The windows are dressed with draperies in a Coraggio silk-and-wool blend.



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A custom bed with a head and footboard in Holly Hunt suede provides refuge in the soaring master bedroom. The wallpaper by Porter Teleo defines the space, along with a plush rug by The Rug Company. Circa Lighting lamps top Baker bedside tables.



The pendant by Moooi from Design Within Reach and the side table by Bungalow 5 create a graphic juxtaposition to the more traditional feel of the freestanding tub. Diaphanous Roman shade fabric from Thomas Lavin admits plenty of light yet preserves privacy.

A generous umbrella shelters the dining table and chairs, all by Janus et Cie, in the garden—a favorite spot for alfresco entertaining. Landscape designer Cheryl Kellough of Sage Garden Design planned the gardens. Alfonso Paez of Paez Landscape also contributed to the gardens.



Below, left: In an outdoor seating area just off the family room, succulents grow in a pot on a Janus et Cie table.

Below, right: To highlight the sculptural tree behind the barbecue and bar area, Kamenstein hung handwoven Mexican rattan lights from Inner Gardens on the branches. During the day, they are an artistic element, and at night they lend a soft glow when illuminated.

