



Modified Modern

Traditional Touches for Contemporary Collectors in New York



INTERIOR DESIGN BY ROBERT METZGER, ASID
AND MICHAEL CHRISTIANO
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AS A LIFE changes, so must one's sense of style. When a businessman and his wife bought their residence in Westchester County, New York, in the 1970s, they wanted to accommodate a growing collection of modern and contemporary art. The capacious rooms and long stretches of neutral wall space were meant to house museum-scale paintings by artists such as Picasso and Léger, Morris Louis and Jean Dubuffet. But by the late 1980s, they were ready for something new. That meant the introduction of much that was older and more traditional by designers Robert Metzger and Michael Christiano. The result is a comfortable melding of two aesthetics—clean, uncluttered rooms arranged with carefully chosen antiques and furniture now covered in luxurious colors and prints.

"I call it my famous mix," says Metzger. "The best of the old and the best of the new. When people have reached a certain position in life, they want more traditional things. You look at how beautifully made an antique piece is and realize it can never be done that way again. I love contemporary art, but *everything* they had was modern. I introduced Oriental, Russian and Biedermeier furniture." He points out an area of the living room where a contemporary game table is surrounded by four nineteenth-century Russian chairs. A Japanese cabinet stands nearby, while paintings by modern artists Hans Hofmann and Reuven Rubin complete the vignette. "That tells you the whole story," says Metzger. "I don't like museum-restoration houses. I don't like trends. If people ask what color is in this year, I look at them as though they're crazy."

The remodeling included rework-

"There is a formality to the house in a design sense but not in a living sense," says Michael Christiano of the residence he and Robert Metzger updated for art collectors in Westchester County, New York. Anthony Caro's *Table Piece Z-14*, 1980, is set on a 19th-century French trestle table in the entrance hall. In the gallery beyond, a 19th-century Japanese bronze bowl stands on an Edgar Brandt polished-steel console from Newel Art Galleries.



"Using varied textures in earth tones and pale colors, we wanted to create an intimate and relaxed space that allows for a very informal lifestyle," says Metzger. "At the same time, it's a softer, neutral background for the clients' large contemporary art collection." ABOVE: A painting by Kenneth Noland, a George Segal wall construction and a Marie Barreira sculpture are placed near the piano in the living room. Clarence House sofa fabric.

ing the dining room and extending the entrance, the media room and the master bedroom. "They are family-oriented and had emotional ties to the house. They didn't want to tear it down and then build a monument to themselves," Christiano explains.

Beginning with the entrance, the designers wanted to warm the somewhat chilly modernity. "We kept symbolic things, such as the entrance hall table and stone wall that say it's 'home,'" says Christiano. Skylights

and travertine marble floors were added to the gallery corridor, where a wall sculpture by Louise Nevelson, a Barbara Hepworth sculpture and paintings by Hofmann and Raphael Soyer share space with an Art Déco polished-steel console by Edgar Brandt and eighteenth-century Quianlong lacquered armchairs.

The beamed-ceiling living room, with a painting by Kenneth Noland, remains the most insistently modern room. Metzger softened the effect by

using sheer draperies topped with wooden valances, glazing the walls and adding pickled-wood floors. The predominantly neutral upholstery fabrics and rugs are enlivened with pillows in soft pastel silks.

In the dining room, the designers were able to further disguise the modern elements. Metzger bought a dozen lacquered Chinese Chippendale-style chairs and other Oriental accessories. He hung swagged draperies and gold-leafed the dining table. Picasso's *Femme*

OPPOSITE: Olive-and-ash-burlwood cabinetry gives one corner of the library "a traditional sense of warmth with an updated design vocabulary," Metzger says. *Mother and Child*, a 1974 sculpture by Chaim Gross, is on the Parsons-style game table from Karl Springer. Chairs are by Giacometti.



IRVING LANS
THE POWER GAME
KISSINGER
LOU DOUGLAS
GARY DONOVAN
THE POWER GAME
ALPHABET
ANUSZKIEWICZ
GEORGE SORAL
ALEXANDER
ROY LICHTENSTEIN
PAUL JENKINS
HENRI MATHIS
DORIS ROBINSON
LEZARDIA
THE MESSIAH
A METAPHOR
THE MESSIAH

THE DEATH OF A PRESIDENT
DE KOONING
YOU KIPPER
THE MESSIAH

THE DEATH OF A PRESIDENT
MORRIS LANS
CORSE SCOTT
REBECCA
BEN CLAY
GUARDIAN
MORRIS LANS

A MANDALAY WORLD
POWELL
MORRIS LANS
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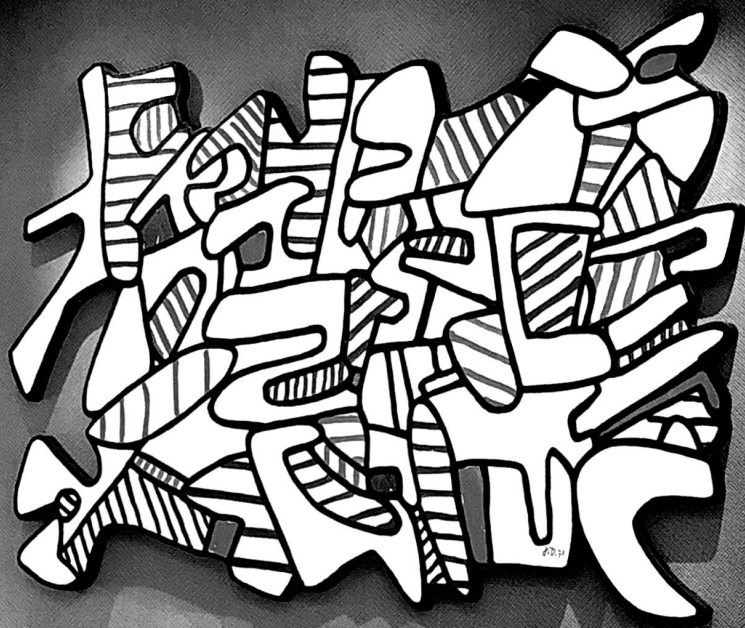
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GEORGE SEGAL
GREEK SCULPTURE & FIGURES AND A



"Throughout the house, subtle variations add a low-key richness," says Metzger. PRECEDING PAGES: Fernand Léger's *Paysage Animé*, 1921, left, and Jean Dubuffet's *Massif aux Echancres*, 1971, hang in the media room, which is furnished with comfortably upholstered and modern pieces. *Mother and Child on a Curved Bench*, 1980, by Henry Moore is displayed on the side table, foreground. A 19th-century Japanese lacquer box from Naga Antiques rests on the low table. Swivel chair from Karl Springer. Clarence House fabric for sofa, walls and draperies. Edward Fields carpet.

BELOW: Picasso's 1958 *Femme Couchée* overlooks the dining table, set with the family china and silver. Tiffany's crystal.

"I call it my famous mix," says Metzger. "The best of the old and the best of the new."

Couchée surveys the scene. "The look is more elegant and tactile but not gaudy or ornate. The pieces I've introduced are strong and architectural in feeling," Metzger says.

"I never save anything for company. I'm the company," he insists. "That's how these clients live. They eat in the dining room every night."

One of the designers' challenges was a large room used for two distinct purposes. One side offers a concealed projection television screen that drops down at the touch of a button, two smaller monitors and video-editing equipment. Tapes are stored behind bronze panels. Controls for the media, lighting and security systems are housed in a burlwood pod they designed. Facing the media wall and lining the room are sofas in russet shades complemented by the bronze walls. Paintings by Léger and Dubuffet are softly illuminated. "I like to light paintings so you can see them, but not as if they had arrows pointing to them. That's the 'Look at Me' school of design," says Christiano.

The opposite end of the room serves as a library and bar. "We tried to abstract the elements of an English room and interpret them in a more contemporary way," adds Christiano. The walls are lined with bookcases and cabinetry made of olive and ash burlwood. The result is an intimate

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OPPOSITE ABOVE: Moses Soyer's 1974 *Seated Nude* is paired with *Big Rock*, 1958, by Grandma Moses in a sitting area. A Swedish Boule marquetry mirror is above an 18th-century English desk from George Subkoff Antiques. Chair and pillow fabric, Cowtan & Tout; Nesle desk lamps.

OPPOSITE: "For the master bedroom, we created a sophisticated environment with traditional elements," Metzger says. Kangxi porcelains and Charles X candlesticks stand on the 18th-century French mantel. The Swedish open-arm chairs from Newel and the Austrian marble-topped table are 19th century, as are the Russian chest of drawers and Baccarat crystal-and-bronze-doré garniture atop it. Fabric on open-arm chairs and silk on bed from Brunschwig & Fils; velvet on chaise longue and sofa from Cowtan & Tout; Manuel Canovas wallcovering. Edward Fields carpet.

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club room filled with photographs, mementos and books. A pair of Giacometti chairs are drawn up to the game table where a Chaim Gross sculpture is perched. The handwoven carpet of camel and burgundy adds an extra layer of richness and warmth.

A small room that had little function in the original house was reclaimed by the designers as a sitting area. An eighteenth-century English japanned desk and a rope chair gave the room its focus. "It's a perfect space for the wife to attend to her cor-

"If people ask what color is in this year, I look at them as though they're crazy," Metzger says.

respondence," Christiano explains. Works by Grandma Moses and Moses Soyer add to the pleasant, distinctly feminine atmosphere.

The master bedroom was given extra depth in the form of an adjacent sitting room with a fireplace. The designers added an articulated archway to mark a separation between the two connected rooms. Behind the bed, another arch frames a wall of mirror, establishing the illusion of depth. Gilt Giacometti *étagères* hold Han Dynasty jars, Bluejohn urns and Exportware chargers. A nineteenth-century Russian chest is topped with a Baccarat garniture.

"The master bedroom is the most important room in the house to me," says Metzger. "With its color and ambiance, it's a great space, very romantic." As the last room of the house to be designed, it is also the most traditional, reflecting the changing tastes of the clients.

"I look at the house now that it's finished, and it sends shivers through me. It's worth all the energy and effort," concludes Metzger. □

Michael Landon
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you might have in a ranch house."

The living room, or great room, also features a high ceiling with exposed oak beams, and offers the warmth of a wood floor, patinated walls and contemporary furnishings mixed with Italian and French antiques. The kitchen is distinguished by a creative touch that also has a historic legacy and practicality—the spaces between the ceiling beams are lined with rows of rough-hewn saplings. "The saplings are in keeping with the overall theme of creating an aged look," says Earl. "They give the ceiling a unique texture and add to the feeling of warmth. But they are also faithful to the period. In the old days they were used as insulation."

Wilson further articulated the artfully aged theme in the dining room by suspending ceramic Hispano-Moresque chargers above the fireplace and anchoring an oak-topped table on antique iron legs. Then he added the coup de grace—an eight-point iron chandelier hung with chunks of rock crystal. "The idea for the chandelier hit me one day when I was try-

is flanked by Spanish stone-topped night tables, a writing desk and an overscale sofa and chaise longues. Down the hall from the master bedroom are bedrooms for Michael and Cindy Landons' two youngest children, the girl's adorned with fanciful trompe-l'oeil furnishings and the boy's with movie posters.

Behind the main house are acres of open space for the children and their menagerie of seven dogs, two rabbits and two horses. The landscaping consists of luxuriant stands of eucalyptus, magnolias, fruit and pepper trees, some of which were transplanted fully grown. "If I were twenty-eight years old," says Landon, who is in his mid-fifties, "I would have planted baby trees. But at my age, I can't wait for trees to grow."

Beyond the trees atop a steep hill are the stables, reached by a long driveway, which, Landon says, had to be built to accommodate the turning radius and weight of a fifty-thousand-pound fire truck, according to local ordinances. The stables feature a horse pen, covered stalls, a first-floor

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ing to think of something that would make the room special," says Wilson. "Hanging it with natural rough stone like rock crystal was in keeping with the Landons' style, and it was unique, something no one else had done."

The first floor also includes two of Michael Landon's favorite haunts: his office, filled with photographs and awards from his television shows; and a lounge area, which features a sunken fire pit and a stone-topped game table. The second floor of the residence elaborates on the design themes established downstairs. The master bedroom has a sloping roof supported by exposed pine beams, a fireplace, a carved low poster bed that

tack room and a second-floor private lounge with pine-paneled walls and French-tiled floors.

It is only from the stable's second-floor vantage point that the Landons can glimpse the ocean, which is less than a mile to the west of their secluded canyon. But, more important, they have a breathtaking and intimate view of their ranch house and the wilderness park nearby. And on one lucent morning not long ago, the couple were clearly savoring the privacy of this self-styled rustic world of their own. As Cindy Landon says, "I've had so many people ask me, 'Don't you miss the beach?' And I say, 'No, not at all.'" □