

# interiors

MAGAZINE









## LA | TRANSFER

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**SOME INTERIOR DESIGN PROJECTS ARE GIFT-WRAPPED** blank slates. They have a nascent, malleable, puppy-in-training loyalty. Everything else is designed from what exists, maneuvering around constraints and realities. If creative sovereignty is a designer's greatest desire, then metamorphosis is the ultimate interior design rush. And there is no greater hit than a look at the before-and-after photos.

"The house was very dated Beverly Hills," says Kara Smith, principal of California interior design firm Smith/Firestone Associates (sfa design), politely alluding to original snapshots of the 7,400-square-foot project. "It didn't feel new and fresh and clean, which you ultimately see now." Gracious but tired, the interior squeezed into its space like a defeated dieter: a formerly modern property that had overindulged in the richness of traditional tastes—plaster finishes, fussy window treatments, a muted palette wistful for the sunny flirtations of 90210. When the clients, a family from Indonesia, toured the property, the husband looked past the cosmetics, enthralled by the dual staircase. "He's attracted to symmetry; he has twin daughters," says senior designer Steven Didrick, explaining the affinity for visual equilibrium.

Transformation is still an artistic process, despite what the cable shows insist can be completed in a weekend. With the clients' request to forgo a major renovation, and factoring in a brisk timeline—less than a year—Smith and Didrick had to reinvent what would be the family's second home via the optics of their crisp, contoured rendition of transitional style. "The husband had a fondness for slightly more contemporary, tailored taste, and the wife wanted things a bit more floral and feminine. So finding that balance combined with just the core construction characteristics was a challenge," says Smith.







The palette is black and white, a classic pairing that is alluringly geographical: The residence is minutes away from Rodeo Drive, where the reverberation of fashion and posh play are constant. Didrick took photographs of the surroundings, studying the landscape to "get a sense of luxury and timelessness, and to give the interior a sense of place," he says. "The clients really wanted that—they didn't want something that reflected their own culture, they wanted a California home. So that's where we drew our inspiration."

Without careening into the L.A. narrative—a strong midcentury influence, lines so clean they abrade personality, architecture that grows—sfa design created an intuitively chic home that is present-day luminous. Well-defined pieces from Donghia, Design Around Objects and Lily Jack fold into the lightness of the West Coast in an environment the family can sink into after the long flight from Jakarta to Beverly Hills. Most of the vibrant contemporary artwork was discovered at a local art fair Didrick happened by one Saturday. Against the creamy walls, ruptures of color emerge: magenta and orange from artist Andy Anh Ha's *Line* series upstairs; the bright yellow pucker of photographer Julie Brothers' sculptural image of a calla lily from floral designer Eric Buterbaugh in the guest bedroom.















The custom John Pomp light fixture is a striking, clarion echo above the dining table, visible from the living room. "It was important that these two rooms spoke to each other," says Didrick. "They have a similar palette; we have soft plum sheers in one and alternating pops of purple in the other, and the rich piping detail on the dining chairs. We wanted to create a serene feeling with luxurious fabrics and a sense of opulence—it was about keeping the palette soft and livable." The tone-on-tone ease is translated by Innovations Belgique Oyster velvet upholstery and mirrored consoles that lavish daylight like love notes across the room.

After a zesty redux, the media room was promptly declared family headquarters. Opuzen's Crimson Leopard fabric is a punchy exclamation, followed by a few carefully placed red accents (this is a town of showmanship and big gestures) and clean lounge pieces. The coffee table was a collaboration with local studio DAO, featuring a chunky stripe of bronze. The firm painted the room two shades darker than the rest of the home and spirited away an overhead projector (a relic of technology past) that once hovered, also restoring the ceiling's original height. On the mezzanine, sfa design eliminated the indecision that typically shadows these in-between passages, conjuring a custom tête-à-tête sofa upholstered in a plum Opuzen fabric so the twins would have a cozy spot for giggling and gossip.

While the design concept was highly collaborative, much of what the pair devised was instinctual. Creating a home for clients in another time zone requires semesters-worth of AP class notes and long-distance consultations, and (minus a few key in-person meetings) they found a reliable messenger in PowerPoint. Smith and Didrick had to imbue the space with refinement and intimacy—imagining the changing tastes of teenagers; composing a master bedroom with a textured Donghia wallcovering of her choice that was in harmony with his selection for the bed.







"Ultimately we took the approach of layering strong choices with the things they loved," says Smith. "We wanted it to feel like a home, not a show house. These layers, created through the editing process, resulted in something different, but light and very open." ■  
 Smith / Firestone Associates, [sfadesign.com](http://sfadesign.com)









