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HOME BASE

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARY E. NICHOLS

FOR MOST PEOPLE, BEVERLY HILLS SUMMONS IMAGES OF MANSIONS ON ROLLING GREEN LAWNS. For the savvy few, it's home to some of the finest urban living in the Los Angeles area, with high-rises boasting killer views and ample space, well located but still a distance from gritty downtown.

Alabamian Josh Greer already had plenty of real estate know-how as a townhome developer in his home state, so, when he moved to LA, he immediately gravitated to a Beverly Hills building better known among longtime Angelenos.

"I think I've always had an eye for real estate," says Greer. "It has a draw you cannot explain, and, once you're here in Los Angeles, you realize that it's at the center of everything." He also discovered the city to be the perfect base from which to pursue his penchant for buying a home for himself, then renovating and reselling it and starting all over again. "That can be disruptive if you move neighborhoods," Greer said. "I landed here and realized that I can keep redoing spaces and never have to leave home."

INTERIOR DESIGN David Phoenix, David Phoenix, Inc.		
BEDROOMS 2	BATHROOMS 3	SQUARE FEET 2,011



STYLE SELECTION

Italian-born Elio Raffaelli's intricately blown glass sculpture, circa 1970s, exhibits the master's precision and use of refined techniques. *Signed Elio Raffaelli Gray Glass Flower, \$5,000; craigvandenbrulle.com*



GRAY AREA

A Chuck Arnoldi painting and a wool-and-silk-blend carpet, custom-designed by David Phoenix and manufactured by Hokanson, provide visual interest in the monochromatic living room. The Macassar ebony side tables are by J. Robert Scott; the ceramic lamps are by John Boone. A George Cameron Nash sofa covered in a Glant chenille and a pair of Paul Ferrante chairs upholstered in silk velvet from Robert Allen keep company with a glass and bronze coffee table by David Sutherland.



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He has renovated four apartments over the past five years, the last two with designer David Phoenix, of the namesake LA firm, whom he initially met socially. Yet perhaps more important than their friendship was Phoenix's high comfort level with his client's admitted perfectionism. "He's very particular about where he watches TV, where he talks on the phone and where he works," Phoenix says.

And this job was huge. The prior owner was a hoarder who had lived there for many years. "There were tires in the living room, and it was beyond filthy," Phoenix says. "We took this apartment down to the studs. It looked like a crime scene."



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The designer's task was to create "an elegant, refined interior that suited my client's needs," he says. "The elements in this apartment are traditional, but we've given it an updated look—it's clean and fresh. Being monochromatic and not having a lot of things going on makes it more streamlined, but it's warm and inviting. It says, 'Hello,' when you walk in the door."

The apartment, originally built with six rooms (three of them bedrooms) in 1964, was reconfigured into an airy two-bedroom home with three baths, a meticulously designed room-size closet and a foyer—the building's first—for privacy. To raise ceilings 1½ to 2½ feet, air vents were hidden in soffits. "It took a year just for the build-out," Greer says. "It was like assembling a ship in a bottle. We were stringing wiring and AC ducts down to an eighth of an inch."

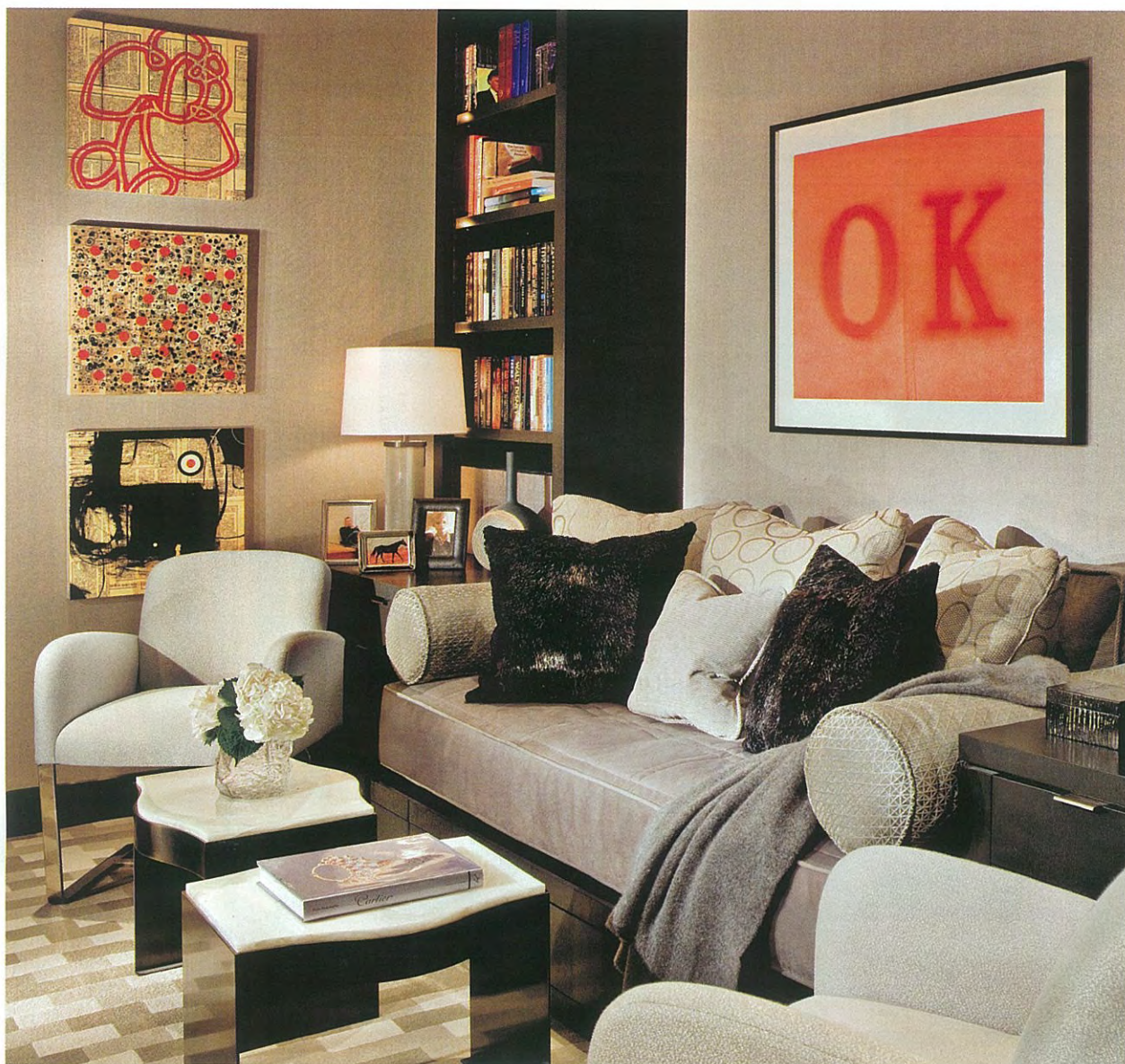
BOTTOMS UP

Phoenix fashioned the dining room table base from limestone—the same material used for the floor—and topped it with glass. The designer also created the cubic chairs with Edelman leather and paired them with J. Robert Scott host chairs covered in cut velvet. Drapes in a Bergamo silk gabardine from Kneeder-Fauchère enhance the view.



FIRST GLANCE

The home's front door opens onto a foyer designed to provide a privacy zone between visitors and the reconfigured apartment. A Robert Mapplethorpe photo paired with rock crystal obelisks from Mimi London create a dramatic tableau atop the Macassar ebony and nickel credenza by John Boone. The floating benches of white bronze and black pony skin were designed by James Magni; the rug is from Mansour Modern.



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Since Greer is not a fan of color, Phoenix stuck to a palette of gray, white and black, with only occasional splashes of orange for contrast; visual interest was supplied by contrasting textures. "He likes to have friends over to enjoy the color outside," Phoenix says, referring to massive windows with grand views of city lights and hills, and a balcony that runs the length of the apartment. "You have the green landscape, and it's very dramatic."

Just as important as what you see is what you don't: Greer wanted to outfit his man cave with the latest technology—controlling entertainment, drapes, alarms and more with a single touch—and he insisted that all of it be invisible, hidden behind cabinetry.

ORANGE POP

Phoenix added a punch of color to the neutral den by pairing an Ed Ruscha lithograph with three paintings on newspaper over canvas, which the owner bought from a Tokyo street artist. Chairs covered in wool bouclé and small bronze tables topped by white onyx slabs—both by Donghia—complete the seating cluster. The rug was custom-designed by Phoenix and fabricated by Hokanson.





HOT CHOCOLATE

Phoenix used rich rift oak for the kitchen cabinets and CaesarStone for the countertops and backsplash. Stainless-steel toe kicks protect the bottom cabinets. Paul Ferrante jugs add interest to the clean, functional space. Appliances are by Sub-Zero and Miele.



MEZZANINE SEATING

The owner entertains guests with drinks on the balcony, which runs the length of the apartment. The patio furniture by JANUS et Cie is made of woven resin on aluminum frames. Zebra cushions covered in Perennials outdoor fabric and David Jones Custom Florist topiaries add zing.

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Adam Leichtman, of Access Point Designs in Van Nuys, helped him accomplish that easily. "Every other AV person I worked with, I'd get into a knock-down, drag-out fight because they'd want to see everything, and I didn't," Greer says. "But Adam was excited about helping me do things the way I wanted to."

And now that he's dotted every "i" in his ideal interior design, Greer may just stay put for a while. "I really love where I am," he says. "This has everything I ever wanted to incorporate in a unit here, down to every inch. I had four tries; I finally got it right." **L**





WHITE LIGHTNING

A white leather chair by Holly Hunt is set on a white granite floor installed by Zeolla Marble in Tarzana, accented with a wool-and-silk-blend rug from Mansour Modern. French Sainte-Anne marble the color of gray flannel—from Exquisite Surfaces in Beverly Hills—encases the tub and countertop.