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BRIDGING THE GAP

Thoughtful interventions close the divide between modern architecture and a collection of classic art and furnishings.

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Interior Design: Andy Beers, Ore Studios Home Builder: Steve Moeller, Schultz Miller





Built in the mid-20th century and completely remodeled in 2002, this contemporary Seattle abode features an exterior palette of aluminum, concrete and steel. The industrial aesthetic is a dramatic contrast to the lush property overlooking Lake Union.

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s a sculptural object, this midcentury house overlooking Lake Union has always been distinctive. Its swooping aluminum-clad roof suggests the wings of an aircraft that might lift

off from its hillside perch at any moment and glide over the water below. As a viewfinder, the design is equally effective. “The building is almost entirely windows,” its owner remarks. “In Seattle, we are starved for sunshine, and the house does an amazing job of bringing in light and capturing the majesty of the Olympic Mountains and lake views.”

The residence, which was last remodeled in 2002, was designed with bold, brawny forms and finishes. “It had Peruvian walnut floors, light sycamore wall and ceiling paneling, a lot of aluminum sheeting, and concrete fiber board wall panels that met up with stucco,” recalls interior designer Andy Beers, who was hired to orchestrate the renovation. “It was not to the current owner’s taste.” But the homeowner, a collector of European Art Deco furnishings and art, looked beyond the aesthetics. “He could see the value of the location,” Beers says. “He knew the bones were good enough that, with the right surgical interventions, he could imagine his life inside this house.”

Those nips and tucks began with the floors. The dark planks, which gave the adjacent sycamore wall panels an orange cast, were replaced with a lower-contrast white oak. New casework featuring fluting and pilaster details was designed as a bridge between the existing wall paneling and the fine detail of the client’s favored furnishings.

The kitchen, which Beers and general contractor Steve Moeller reconfigured to create a more convivial space for the homeowner and his daughter, required the most intensive intervention: “The house had settled over the years, which was especially evident in the kitchen,” Moeller recalls. “So, we reframed the floor to level it; this proved especially important when it came to fitting cabinetry precisely in the space.” It also ensured the smooth installation of handmade

backsplash tile, which Beers placed in a running bond pattern rather than a more contemporary straight set to honor the homeowner’s traditional tastes. “It’s the finely tailored moments that really make the house feel like his,” Beers says.

In fact, tailoring was at the top of the designer’s mind—the luxurious menswear created by Italian designer Brunello Cucinelli served as a north star for Beers as he softened the spaces with rich fabrics, from wool flannel upholstery in a headboard niche to the study’s linen wallcovering. In the living room, he covered an entire wall of concrete fiber board with a wool challis drapery, “so you feel really cozy as you’re looking out at the water,” he explains.

As their subdued colors and patterns suggest, such finishes were meant to defer to the owner’s beautifully wrought collection of French Art Deco furniture—including reproductions of an Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann desk and chairs—and the newly acquired pieces that it complements. “When I originally talked to Andy and his team, I requested something clean lined for the new furnishings,” the client says, “because you would never feel casual in a French Art Deco living room.” This inspired Beers to reference the Bauhaus, a concurrent design style that yielded more quotidian pieces like the living room’s Ludwig Mies van der Rohe-designed daybed. Around it, Beers added an American Art Deco tubular chrome chair and several contemporary American and Italian designs, “so the client’s collection could have a relationship to the architecture of the home.”

The interior’s vertical planes display fine art, including French Cubist and Art Deco paintings by André Lhote and Jean Dunand. For the entry hall, where an expansive piece was needed to cover a long stretch of wall paneling, Beers commissioned local artist Robert Williamson to create a large-scale work inspired by an early-1920s decorative screen by Irish designer Eileen Gray.

“Having beautiful art surrounding you is one of the things that brings joy to life,” the homeowner says of his new abode. “Too many people look only at practicality, but there’s a certain beauty to life that we need to appreciate.” The French Art Deco artists certainly embraced that ethos, and now this midcentury Seattle home does, too. ■

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Drapery in Coraggio's wool challis provides a soft backdrop for the living room's Dmitriy & Co sofa. It is joined by vintage Maxalto chairs, a metal-frame armchair from Rehab Vintage Interiors and a Lawson-Fenning coffee table.



Above: Bespoke cabinetry by Northwest Custom Cabinets painted in Benjamin Moore's Vintage Pewter contrasts against the kitchen's warm oak floors. For the backsplash, Encore Ceramics' field tile is set in a traditional running bond pattern.

Opposite: In the dining room, a Chadhaus table highlights the raw beauty of walnut and steel, while A. Rudin chairs introduce tailored details with their cane backs and leather seats. The chandelier is by O'Lampia, and the vintage wool rug is from Driscoll Robbins.



Roland Halbe photographs of the iconic Edith Farnsworth House and a vintage Noguchi floor lamp bring midcentury style into the primary bedroom. Dressed in Parachute linens, the bed tucks into a Holland & Sherry-upholstered niche.



Above: New door and drawer fronts by Northwest Custom Cabinets lend a clean aesthetic to the guest bathroom's vanity. Subtly textured Tonalite wall tile and GBI Tile + Stone honed limestone floor tile give the shower a sense of serenity.

Opposite: The house and its tree-shaded terraces are built into a hillside overlooking Lake Union. A steel-and-teak dining table and chairs, both by Kingsley Bate, reference the metal cladding used on the residence's exterior.