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SE REMODELA UNA RESIDENCIA EN LOS ANGELES, UN RANCHO PARA SONAR EN NUEVO MÉXICO, RENOVACIÓN DE CUATRO CASAS ESTILO RENACENTISTA EN FRANCIA



Architecture by James R. Harlan
Text by Michael Sorkin/Photography by Mary E. Sorkin



To Begin Again

CONTEMPORIZING A DATED L.A. HOUSE
FROM THE FOUNDATION UP



It is easy to get attached to a house you've lived in for a quarter century. Alice and Marketa Leonard may have wished that their 1962 ranch home in the Hollywood Hills had brighter rooms, a sweeping view and something more than a deck as an oasis. But they accepted its limitations and

would still be happy whenever if Marketa Leonard had not happened to meet architect James R. Harlan at a friend's house, where she admired the improvements he had made to it. "I loved the way he had upgraded their house, using natural materials and atmospheric lighting. It made the interior feel modern but

The Larry Baskin and Heather Lee sculpture in Alice and Marketa Leonard's living room in Los Angeles. "The sculpture makes a statement," says architect James R. Harlan, who rebuilt the couple's 1966 structure. Above: Larry A. Gray 1988 house in the same neighborhood.

still warm," she recalls. "I told him he must do a remodel for us." Her husband, a music and media attorney, agreed.

Harlan, who helped the late Frank Gehry design houses for movie director Robert Altman and fashion designer Michèle Lamy in the late eighties before setting up his own residential practice,

quickly realized that the Leonards' old house lacked the potential to be successfully remodeled, so the couple bought another, of a similar vintage, a mile to the west. Though also architecturally undistinguished, it did have two great assets: an expansive, if overgrown, garden and a spectacular view to the north.

"In comparison of floating glass, straight lines and clean lines gives the interior full and living room a sculptural quality," says Marketa Leonard. "The sculpture was installed. A photograph by Stephen Brinkley is on the granite shelf. Marketa Leonard designed the benches.





of the San Fernando Valley with a backdrop, on clear days, of rolling mountain ranges. Clients and architect decided to tear down the existing structure to its foundations, eliminating all but a few graceful pieces, and start anew.

After more than a year of discussions, the Lenards wanted Hartig to provide a contemporary design they would find comfortable with. "From seeing Jim's work, we knew there would be a lot of sharp edges, but we felt that wood and stone and the right furnishings would soften them," she says. The first priorities were to open the house up to the gardens through sliding glass doors, group light-filled rooms around a high-ceilinged living/dining room large enough for entertaining, and have an intimate kitchen/media room.

Allen Leonard, who wakes early, wanted a study with its own bath so he could start work at home in the morning without disturbing his wife. They considered a second-story master suite linked to a gym by a catwalk that would open the living/dining rooms, but they ran into problems—on height and setbacks, since the house is located in a tightly regulated view corridor. It made more sense to put all the rooms on the same level.

Beyond those straightforward requirements, the clients gave their architect a free hand, and they were delighted with his initial design—compact and bold but full of surprises. Baritone white stone veneer covered the entrance from the driveway, and one bay is step up and reveals the garage to discover an area that extends through the house, dividing public from private areas and revealing the vista beyond. A handful of interlocking concrete walkways from a Japanese-inspired garden, with dead bamboo, weave side. The interior opens very in-line. From the eleven-foot-high entrance hall to the fifteen-foot-high living room, and down to the six-foot-high dining room and the eight-foot ceiling of the kitchen and media room. These shifts of height—accentuated by shaftlike skylights, slits for recessed lighting, and angled walls—con-

"We made the living area larger than it was previously," says Hartig. "I gave the owner light, space and a view." Concrete glass panels connect "so living is sophisticated" is a Douglas table is sophisticated is a Robert Scott table. A black and white Ultraviolet is in the background.



mate the cubic volumes and bring a special complexity to the heart of the house.

The walls are also treated as three-dimensional compositions of floating drywall planes, modeled by natural and core lighting. The right angles and recessions play off each other, achieving a hierarchy of scale down to notches in the doors. Harboon sketched the geometry without using a computer, sculpting the spaces in his head and putting them down on paper. "It was a problem to be solved: How do I modelize this tall black wall and give it some interest?" he explains. Fortunately, his contractor had trained as an architect and was able to achieve the level of precision each party requires.

The Lunardi installed an maple floor in the living areas and carpet in the bedrooms, feeling that the travertine Har-

boon preferred would be too chilly and overbearing. They compromised on a layer of stone around the wood, with the oak expansion joint between the two materials adding an unanticipated grace note. Built-in cabinets and jewelry of straight-grain Douglas fir add a warmer tone and are themselves elegantly framed by the white stone. As a result, one feels embraced by a Constructivist sculpture that is constantly shifting as one moves through it and as fugitive shadows dapple the walls. By filtering the intense light, the architect has balanced it with the cooler illumination that comes from the unobstructed expanses of glass to the north. "The house changes its personality every hour of the day," says Allen Leonard.

Each interior space achieves a harmonious balance of openness and enclosure, color and lightness/dark. The same

Across: From Harboon's bedroom #4, 2005, hang over the abstracted in the dining area. "The floating ceiling and wood panels blur the distinction between the walls and perimeter," says Harboon. The table is Harboon's design. Dakota Johnson was the photographer.

Decorative: A study cabinet built in front of one of three windows built in the master suite, which overlooks the rear lawn. A Quince Day green plant and a One-Doll sculpture built the head. (Decorative: An artist in the architect's plan, the entrance hall runs the full length of the house.



white stone, creamy stone, blond maple and golden birch are employed throughout and are set off by the darker tones of the furnishings, grays, coppers, and the cool glaze of the aluminum window frames and structural columns.

The house is even more dramatic at night. Trackless lights illuminate the horizontal borders, casting their shadows across the walls. From the rear lawn, one gazes over a carpet of light in the valley below and turns to see the house reflected in the pool and the last pool that wraps around one corner. The glow of wood and the abstract patterns of bubble white planes emerge through the variable walls of glass. "It's more than I could have imagined and everything I wanted," says Marlene Larnoff. Her husband concurs. "We got a work of art rather than a box to put art into." □

