

INTERIOR DESIGN

WINDSOR SMITH DESIGNS AN “ARCHITECTURAL ÉTAGÈRE” OF A HOME

by Tim McKeough | October 10, 2016

The esteemed Los Angeles–based designer describes, step by step, how she furnished a Beverly Hills mid-century modern gem to create a layered space that reflects the owners’ love of art and travel.



Windsor Smith was following in the footsteps of design heavy hitters when she reimagined a mid-century home in Beverly Hills (portrait by Cindy Gold). Top: The bright, airy sunroom features organic pieces like an open-basket-weave drum table, a vintage striped kilim rug and a rush-seat spindle-back chair by Luigi Caccia Dominioni (All photos by Victoria Pearson, unless otherwise noted).

When a couple approached Los Angeles-based interior designer Windsor Smith two years ago and asked her to redesign their newly purchased home in Trousdale Estates, a fashionable mid-century modern enclave in Beverly Hills, the structure already had a formidable design history. Completed by architect Harold W. Levitt in 1956 with Yul Brynner as an early resident, it was later purchased and overhauled by designer Kelly Wearstler, who published a book about the project, and transformed once again by Ellen DeGeneres, the talk show host and comedian with a keen eye for design.

Smith, who is known for creating relaxed, livable spaces that freely blend periods and styles, felt neither constrained nor intimidated. "I'm a big admirer of both Ellen and Kelly, and I was thrilled to have the opportunity to follow such great ladies," she says. To find a fresh voice for the home, she explains, she just had to look at her clients' lifestyles. "They needed the house to be a sort of curiosity cabinet" that could highlight the extensive collection of art and artifacts they had gathered during international travels. "The home is really almost an architectural étagère," Smith adds.

Working with the clients' belongings, and retaining some touches of the previous designers, Smith focused on tying everything together with a layered mix of vintage and custom pieces. Creating the perfect combination, she says, "was almost like solving a Rubik's Cube."



The house figured in 2015's *Windsor Smith Homefront: Design for Modern Living*, the designer's visually lush first monograph, which ranged across a variety of projects. Here, she sharpens her focus, sharing with *Introspective* her design decisions in this one memorable commission, room by room.

Library

This space was designed as a library, but my clients wanted it also to work as a more intimate dining setting where they could drink their coffee or have dinner with just the two of them — I call it a dining library. We nestled an antique [Regency table](#), which they already owned, into the corner so it doesn't dominate the room, and then added dining chairs from [Lucca Antiques](#), a vintage wingback chair, a Moroccan rug from [Mansour](#) and a tribal-looking African table they picked up in their travels. Together, it feels collected over time, which I love. The sofa is light blue and slight because I wanted a playful counterpoint to those towering dark bookcases.



In the library, which is also intended to serve as a dining space, a center table is paired with new, stylized open barrel-back chairs. A pale agate blue bench-seat sofa pops against the dark, floor-to-ceiling bookcases, which are illuminated by bronze trumpet lamps.

Media Room

The beautiful built-in cabinet was already in this room, and I loved the way the grain direction changes from door to door. I decided to echo the wood grain, which has a lozenge-like shape on some drawers, with the tufted vintage cognac-leather DS-P sofa by [De Sede](#). We custom-made the coffee table because we wanted something on which you could put up your feet and spread out the newspaper while also displaying things like the clients' Indonesian figures. The table has these box cushions that store underneath, and you can bring them up to make it work as an ottoman. We also added floor cushions because this is a place for people to gather and flop on the floor.



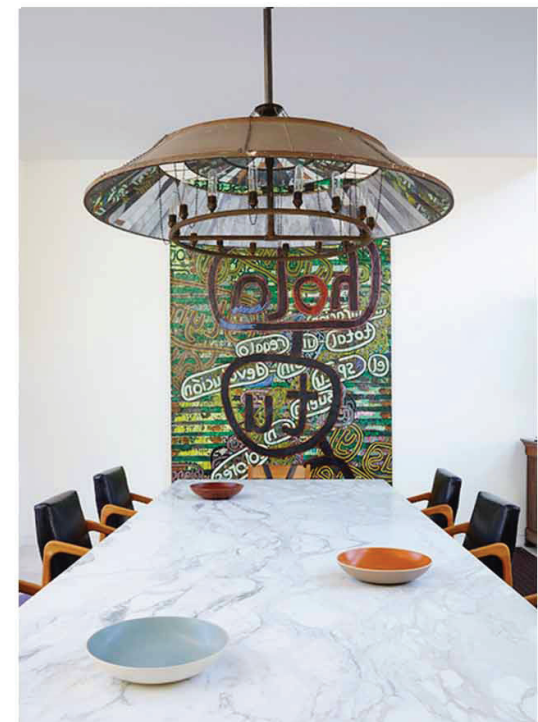
Smith chose low-profile furniture for the great room, so as not to challenge the striking view of the outdoors or the artwork within the home, like the vintage wooden sculptures from South America.

Dining Room

This room reminds me of a great cafeteria in Barcelona. The chandelier remained in the house from Ellen, and we worked around it. I love mixing modern and old things every chance I get. With such powerful art by [Alexandra Grant](#) on the wall, there's not a lot else you can add — it holds the room on its own. So we had fun by buying dishes that are colorful and playful, which the owners can mix and match for dinner parties.

Sunroom

This space [shown at top] is a little more unbuttoned than the rest of the house. It's the place you go to relax, and I wanted an urban ethnic vibe. I found the open-basket-weave drum table at [Ruby Beets](#). The rug is a vintage striped kilim. For comfort, I mixed a deep-upholstered sofa and chairs with more sculptural pieces, like the 1940s rush-seat, spindle-back chair by [Luigi Caccia Dominioni](#).





Sitting Room

We wanted this room to be really comfortable. It has a warm Scandinavian feel, with the charcoal walls. We put two vintage [Børge Mogensen](#) love seats from [Wyeth](#) beside rather than opposite each other. The owners already had the tufted armchairs. You couldn't have planned it — they're probably not what you would purposely pick — but somehow everything works together. It's an eclectic experience, and I'm always most comfortable in these kinds of spaces. It doesn't have to be all one period, and it shouldn't feel like you just went into one showroom and bought it all.



A painting by [Alexandra Grant](#) is the focal point of the dining room. Smith chose furniture that wouldn't compete with this strong artwork, such as the marble dining table and leather-and-wood mid-century chairs.



In the sitting room, a pair of [Børge Mogensen](#) Model 2192 Coupe sofas are positioned next to each other, while a mid-century lounge chair by Osborne & Little provides a bold graphic pop with its enlarged Greek-key pattern.