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# WAYS OF SEE ING

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A stunning Westside aerie is designed for both art appreciation and the comforts of home *by* MAYER RUS / *photographs by* RICHARD POWERS



A Cy Twombly painting anchors one end of the expansive living and dining room. A 1930 Dominique Studio Art Deco chair, Tommi Parzinger floor lamp and custom sofa and python-base coffee table grace Burke's restrained composition.





The study, above, contains a John Baldessari photo montage and rare Pierre Paulin chairs upholstered in white leather. Below, an Andy Warhol drawing hangs above a Jenny Holzer bench at the entry to the gallery corridor. Opposite: Aluminum reveals in the ceiling hint at Crockett's strategy of architectural carving.



As every art aficionado will attest, one white-box gallery is not the same as another. There are nuances of scale, proportion, lighting and architectural detailing that distinguish the merely pedestrian from the exquisite. Getting it right requires extraordinary finesse. But when the challenge of creating a sympathetic showcase for important artworks shifts to residential space, the variables become infinitely more complex.

High above a busy corridor of western Los Angeles, interior designer Vance Burke, architect Robert Crockett and lighting designer Pia DeLeon-Neumayr have conjured an elegant object lesson in balance, restraint and beauty. The apartment they created for a prominent L.A. collector walks the finest of lines—deferring to the mastery of Cy Twombly, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Marcel Duchamp and other virtuosos while providing a rich, highly textured environment well worthy of their company.

“The accommodation of the collection was our first priority,” says Burke, who has considerable experience with this type of assignment. “But the client had no desire to live in a pristine gallery. We still had to conceive an individual identity for the apartment that reflects her spirit.”



A white palette creates tranquility in the master bedroom. A Gillian Wearing photo hangs above a vintage console and a sculpture by Isamu Noguchi. An Edward Wormley chaise and FontanaArte lamps complete the furnishings mix.



Light-channeling Sensitile and a Venetian mirror create a symphony of reflections in the powder room. Crockett designed a slumped-glass wall to enclose the shower, and a niche of opalescent tiles cradles the tub. Opposite: Photos by Cindy Sherman and Zhang Huan greet guests in the aluminum-clad vestibule.



The architectural resolution involved subtle manipulations of space and materials. After devising a plan with ample walls for hanging the art, Crockett approached the design as an exercise in sculptural spacecraft in which a modernist white box was strategically carved away to reveal an internal structure of anodized aluminum.

The foundation for the conceit is laid in the entry vestibule, where the walls, floor and ceiling are entirely clad in aluminum. The material then reemerges throughout the apartment in the form of baseboards, reveals, accent walls and niches. "That allowed us to achieve a certain level of refinement and articulation without detracting anything from the art," Crockett says. "In various places, we played with the finish of the aluminum so that the material remains consistent but the effect changes discreetly."

Burke underscores the importance of the carefully chosen materials in establishing an identity for the apartment and unifying its various rooms. Beyond the entry vestibule, smooth aluminum gives way to antique French oak floorboards wire-brushed and bleached to bring out a driftwood color that makes a warm, amicable foil for both hand-troweled plaster walls and aluminum details.



In specific areas, the restrained palette gives way to materials with a bit more whimsy. The kitchen floor, for example, is made of Italian rubber tiles designed to mimic leather. In the showstopping powder room, a monumental Venetian mirror complements walls covered in silvery Sensitile panels with internal channels that respond to light and movement. The effect is, in a word, dazzling.

With no artwork to consider, the master bathroom gave the designers more freedom to experiment with the decorative flourishes. A sinuous wall of slumped glass encloses the shower, and a freestanding bathtub nestles against a curved span of opalescent glass tiles with subtle notes of pink and green. The result is decidedly more playful and feminine than the rest of the apartment. "The client wasn't afraid of making a statement. The first time she saw the marigold silk rug in the study, she was on board," says Burke. "The trick was to be judicious about where those statements occurred and what they said."

For DeLeon-Neumayr, the project demanded not only technical expertise but considerable sleight of hand. "We had to light the apartment as if it were a gallery—making allowances for artworks of very different scales that ro-

tate in and out—but it couldn't feel like an institutional or commercial space," she says. "So, to make the lighting disappear, we had to conceal the fixtures and controls and establish some design conformity for fixtures with very different functions." In practical terms, that meant customizing an array of fluorescents, LEDs and halogens for maximum efficiency and minimal obtrusion.

To buttress the ingenuity of DeLeon-Neumayr's and Crockett's work, Burke devised a furnishings scheme that eschews decorative arabesques and clutter in favor of a handful of bold gestures and sculptural pieces. In addition to an extensive array of custom designs—including a pair of coffee tables with python-wrapped bases—he deployed an assortment of midcentury classics such as an Edward Wormley chaise and FontanaArte lamps in the bedroom, a Tommi Parzinger standing lamp in the living room and a pair of rare, curviform Pierre Paulin chairs in the study.

"It would be foolish to try and upstage an art collection of this quality," Burke avers. "The best you can do is give it a home that respects the brilliance of the work as well as the imagination and connoisseurship of the person who brought it all together." ♦