

A Roving Eye





Biedermeier, Art Deco, and modern mix it up in Beverly Hills.

BY IRENE LACHER ♦ PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERHARD PFEIFFER

WHEN JIM MAGNI SAW THE CRISP, contemporary house, he knew he had found a perfect match for his client Linda Essakow, who is passionate about spare elegance and uncompromising detail. With its two-story entrance hall that stretches 50 feet and encompasses a balcony gallery, the Beverly Hills residence by architect Charles T. Young would lend the gravitas of a museum space to her art collection. Even more to the point, the home's classical lines and bucolic setting created a European ambience for Essakow, who has lived in Zurich for much of the last 20 years.

"There is a lot of European influence in this house," Magni says, discussing the aesthetic of Young, a onetime associate partner in I.M. Pei's firm. "It's not an easily understood contemporary house, in that it has a lot of classical influences and a lot of detailing. Charles Young and I.M. Pei do contemporary work, but they are classic contemporary buildings."

If the four-bedroom, 10-year-old house was kismet for Essakow, her peripatetic past also made her a perfect match for Magni, whose signature style as an interior designer is a mix of places and eras that he calls "global modernism." Essakow's eye was equally roving, leading her to collect sculpture from her native South Africa, Biedermeier and Art Deco furniture, sensuous glass vases, and contemporary art. Magni's mission was to create a peaceable kingdom of international design with roots stretching back three centuries, which nonetheless added up to a house that felt fresh and new.