



EUROPEAN IMPORT

IN THE HANDS OF DESIGNER VICKI SIMON, A PORTLAND HOME IS IMBUED WITH HER CLIENTS' LOVE OF COLOR AND INTERNATIONAL STYLE.

INTERVIEW BY JENNIFER SERGENT / PHOTOGRAPHY BY AARON LEITZ



YOUR CLIENTS MOVED TO PORTLAND AFTER STINTS IN EUROPE AND ON THE EAST COAST. DID THEY COME WITH A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW THAN OTHER HOMEOWNERS?

They have a very modern European sensibility regarding bold colors. Before this move, they were in Amsterdam, and before that, they were in New York. They didn't want brown and beige, which is very Pacific Northwest. When I meet a client who's not afraid of color, it makes me so excited.

WHAT WAS THE HOUSE LIKE WHEN YOU FIRST SAW IT?

You couldn't tell at all that it was originally a 1939 cottage. It looked new, but very cookie cutter. My design challenge was: How do you inject personality into this?

SO, WHERE DID YOU START?

First, we removed the board-and-batten wainscoting and the excessive trim. We also smoothed out the textured wall finishes.

IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU HAD TO BREAK IT DOWN FIRST BEFORE BUILDING IT BACK UP. WHAT ROOM REQUIRED THE MOST WORK?

The dining room. They had built out the butler's pantry into the space, so it threw off the orientation of the fireplace. The trim drew your eyes to this off-center fireplace, so I said, 'Let's call attention to it, but in a really modern way.' We worked with a wonderful metalworker, Flux Design, and clad it in steel with brass accents that match the lighting. We made it a visual focus of the room.

DID YOUR CLIENTS HAVE ANY MUST-KEEP ITEMS?

They had modern furniture and some great artwork, but the only things they kept were the dining room table, the Roche Bobois sofa and pillows in the living room and the two leather chairs in the family room. Everything else is new or vintage.

HOW DID YOU CHOOSE THE VINTAGE PIECES?

It's all about a mix, like the pair of chairs in the living room—they were just the right scale for the space and broke up the linearity of the square sofa. In the master bedroom, the metal base on the classic Paul McCobb dresser informed the

custom night tables and bench design. A fun vintage piece was the wall art on the lower level in the downstairs hallway. It's the negative of Plexiglas commercial signage templates.

WAS THERE AN OVERALL THEME WHEN YOU WERE SELECTING ART, FURNITURE AND LIGHTING?

There was definitely a slant toward midcentury modern style, gestural painting and figural lines. There were these very linear, square-shaped rooms everywhere, so we added fluid curves, like the living room chandelier, the Ligne Roset sofa and the Brno chair in the office—they break up all the lines. Even the fluid strokes of the Heather Watkins ink drawings outside the master bedroom, the accessories in the living room, and the shape of the chairs in the dining room all have really sinuous, feminine curves to them.

KNOWING HOW YOUR CLIENTS LOVE COLOR, HOW DID YOU HIT ON THIS VERY SPECIFIC, BRIGHT PALETTE?

There's no formula for it. I like to pick colors that are not easily identifiable—hues that are hard to pin down—like the tobacco trim in the family room. What makes it interesting is it's a complex shade made up of a range of greens and browns. There's also a drama factor to the colors in this house, for example, the violet sofa in the study is the only thing in that hue in the entire house—I love having a surprise color.

SPEAKING OF RUGS, THEY INJECT A LOT OF TEXTURE.

I have an affinity for rugs. I've been designing and creating hand-tufted, custom rugs for 30 years. There's a long Moroccan runner in the gallery—it's really soft and cushy underfoot in this space, and it creates a backdrop for the art on the walls. I designed the carpet outside the master bedroom with some of the shapes that mimic the ink drawings above it. The rug in the office is 100-percent wild silk from Fort Street Studio; we got another Fort Street rug for the living room—it's 100-percent wool.

TELL US ABOUT THE MASTER BEDROOM AND HOW YOU ADDRESSED ALL THOSE ANGLES.

I stripped off the craftsman-style trim and put clean, modern trim on the walls, so your eyes don't go there anymore. Instead, they settle on the subtle blue-silver wash on the walls. Everything went monochromatic in this room, devaluing the choppy architecture, so the view becomes the focus.

IT'S COOL HOW YOU FLOATED THE BED IN THE MIDDLE.

Floating the bed was a way to not make you feel like you're in a cave. It also created some walk-around space in back. I wanted something that had some heft to it to go along the low wall. I had a carpenter stain a wood shelf to match the finish on the custom bed. The idea was to create contrast between this slick, modern bed and the rough timber shelf.

IS THE RESULT EVERYTHING YOUR CLIENTS ENVISIONED?

It was a challenge for them to realize we had to start tearing this house apart before we could start designing, but the wife told me that her feelings about the house—and what it means to her family—'soared' at the end of the project. I can't think of a more gratifying job. ■

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A sculpture by Berkeley artist Eric Powell occupies a niche at the end of the gallery inside a Portland home. Designer Vicki Simon sourced works by artists such as Sol LeWitt and Martin Sumers to mingle with her clients' existing collections. Underfoot is a Moroccan carpet from Oscar Isberian Rugs in Chicago.



Simon painted the built-in shelving in the living room an understated hue to create a sophisticated backdrop for a collection of objects, many of which she discovered in antique shops around Seattle. A vintage chandelier from Epoca in San Francisco and a wall sculpture by C. Jeré add a glamorous dimension.

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Joining the clients' existing Roche Bobois sectional in the living room are a pair of vintage chairs from Brooklyn Mall in Portland and wood-and-brass coffee tables by Made. Fort Street Studio in Los Angeles supplied the lush carpet. A pendant by Fredrick Ramond lights the adjacent kitchen island.





Flux Design fabricated the blackened steel fireplace surround in the dining room. Above the clients' own table, ringed with vintage Arne Vodder chairs, is a Matthew Fairbank Design chandelier, and underfoot is a carpet from Kush Rugs. The draperies, in a Mokum fabric, were made by Portland Drapery Co.

Opposite: Simon chose a pair of wallcoverings for the office—a textural Phillip Jeffries version and a vivid Pierre Frey pattern, both from The Dixon Group. Behind the desk are a collection of framed *Fortune* magazines from the 1930s. The Brno chair is from Knoll in San Francisco.

Below: Besides functioning as a home office, the space doubles as a spot for enjoying cocktails and the view. Ligne Roset's curvy Ploum sofa sits atop a wild silk rug from Fort Street Studio. The quilted chair is from Hive, and the cigarette tables are custom through LR Design Co.





A Randolph & Hein bed faces a Paul McCobb dresser, purchased through Oliver Modern on 1stdibs, in the master bedroom. LR Design Co. crafted Simon's design for the nightstand and bench; Revive Upholstery & Design dressed the bench in a Kravet fabric.