

PALM SPRINGS LIFE



PROCESS

Love It or List It

A fresh identity by Nicholas Lawrence Design wins over a homeowner who inherited a 1968 condo and almost opted to sell.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LANCE GERBER



By the time this late-1960s condo changed hands to its current homeowner, he wasn't sure he wanted to hang onto it. The Chicago-based bachelor financier felt little affinity for the 2,430-square-foot residence at La Quinta Country Club. It had been in his family since his father and uncle purchased it new in 1968. Over the years, the house had been a full-time residence, a part-time vacation home, and a rental property. Its lack of character, despite its beautiful location in the sunny desert, had him in a love-it-or-list-it frame of mind.

A Google search led him to Palm Desert-based Nicholas Lawrence Design. After a tour, the firm's co-owner, Nicholas Hertneck, reassured him: A renovation could bring a fresh, consistent identity to those tired spaces that had played too many roles. He was willing to hand it over and see what they could do.

The firm's primary directive was to deliver a home that promotes calm, feels spacious, and is easy to care for. Several initial design decisions supported that end by going entirely against the grain.

"We actually reduced the living space in the house and created more outdoor living space for our client," says Hertneck, who led the design. "The whole back of the house had been expanded out onto the veranda, creating awkwardly proportioned, overly big rooms. By removing that addition and sculpting the interior space, we improved the proportions of the rooms and patios," and restored the indoor-outdoor flow.

They also removed a number of windows that faced the neighbors' air-conditioning units. Replacing the windows with walls eliminated unpleasant views and provided



clockwise from top left: The dining area, now open to the kitchen, feels twice its former size. Chairs are from Knoll. The patio is once again open to the views. A light-colored wood millwork on the lower kitchen cabinets meets a pale high-gloss lacquer on the uppers, perfect for reflecting light. Blue stools are from Hans Wegner for Carl Hansen & Son. Glass sliders link the living area to the re-opened patio space. opposite: Select black accents break up the ivory tones and other neutrals in the living area. Mammoth stool, sofa from DellaRobia, wall unit from Nuovo, and Pilot Chairs from Knoll are all from Modern Hacienda.



more substantial planes to hang art. They even centered the front door.

"Beyond that, we made a lot of little changes that had a big impact on the house," Hertneck says. "We made the design more livable and nuanced."

The once closed-off kitchen now opens to the dining area. The new configuration features wood and lacquer cabinets and appliances by Fisher & Paykel and Sub-Zero. In the adjacent living area, they rotated the seating group toward the views. The classic-modern furnishings throughout the home are from Modern Hacienda, the design firm's showroom. "Every brand is one that we represent," Hertneck says. Among them are Knoll, DellaRobbia, Carl Hansen & Son, Trica, and Speke Klein.

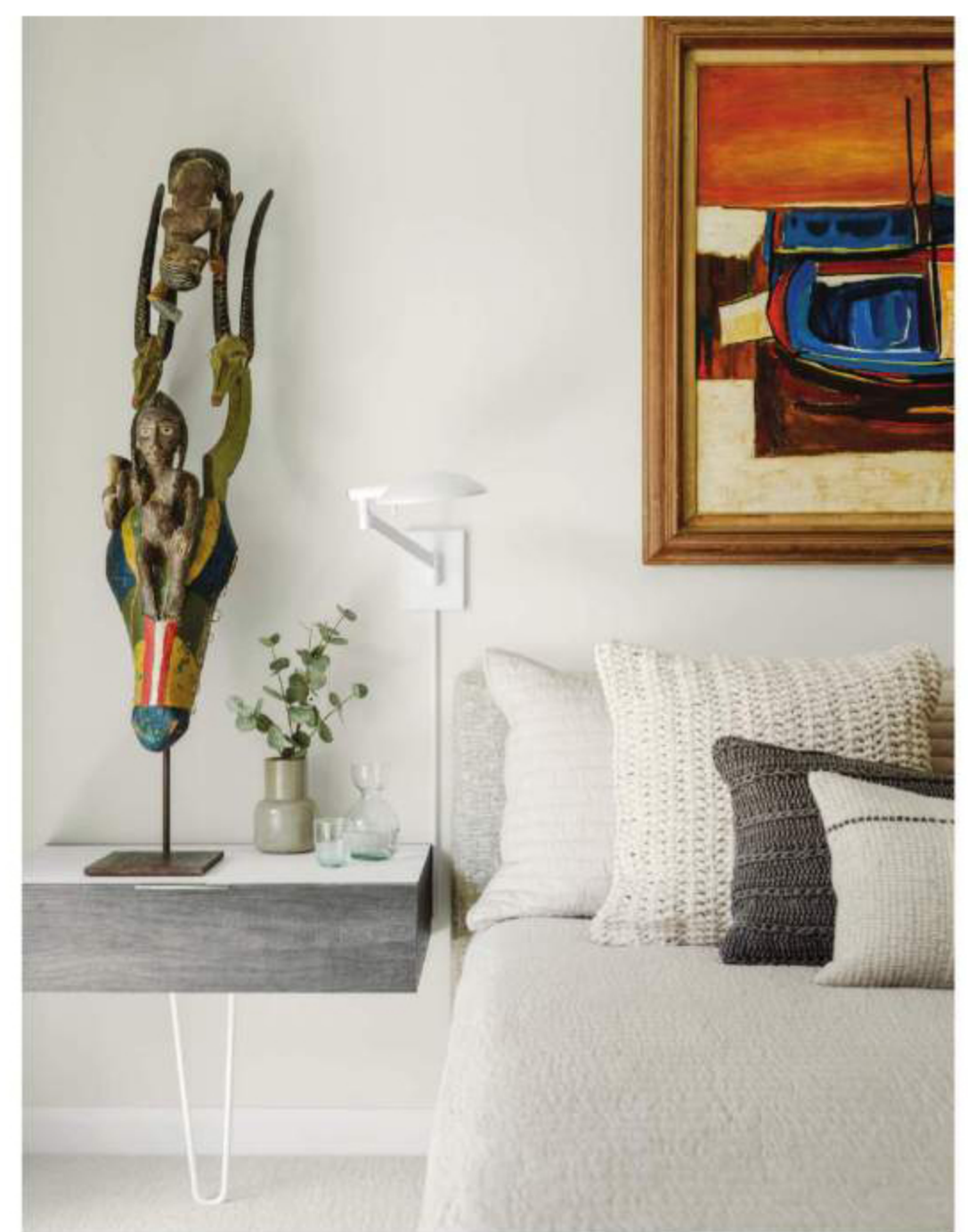
A previous remodel left a dropped ceiling in the primary bedroom that concealed the drama of the original tongue-and-groove construction. But the focal point is a mural fashioned from his own photograph of a geode. Desert Wraps quickly produced the material so they could wrap the wall behind the bed. Guest bedrooms lean more minimalist, letting artwork like an African mask and vintage paintings infuse just enough color.

Bathrooms gleam with new finishes and fixtures. Their formerly sunken showers are step-in modern — and safer. Throughout the home, brightened by "very clean white LED light," new flooring complements Milgard doors and windows, with treatments that reach the ceiling.

"We kept the scale of the furnishings in the scale that you'd see in a house in 1968," Hertneck says. "All of it complements the proportions of the building." The neutral palette instills a sense of calm and creates a background for art. Select pieces belonged to the client's parents yet look just as at home in the new design.

Only once during the eight-month project did the client fly out to visit. Following an initial furniture presentation, all architectural and remodeling conversations regarding the three-bedroom, three-bath home took place via Zoom.

The contemporary version of the residence retains its midcentury modern charm and scale. "The owner has said that the interior is unrecognizable," which for him is a positive. "He's very happy with it," Hertneck says, and the client is not selling. —L.M.H.



clockwise from opposite page:
 "When we discovered the sandblasted-cedar ceiling in the primary bedroom, we re-exposed it," Hertneck says. "That made a huge difference." The wall wrap amplifies an image of a geode. In the guest bedroom, an ornately carved African mask picks up colors in the vintage artwork. The powder / guest bathroom "was originally a gloomy, cramped space," says Hertneck. A large mirror, the vertically patterned Shiva wallcovering by Cowtan & Tout, and sconces by Elan Lighting opened it up. The owner brought the watercolor works from Japan.