



LIGHTENING UP

BY ALLISON KELTNER

The 1950s midcentury modern home, originally designed by renowned architect Sim Bruce Richards, had a lot of character, which initially attracted the owners to the Point Loma home. But after living there for a couple of years, they were ready for an update.

“They just couldn’t live in the darkness anymore,” said Christie May of Rockwell Interiors. Her clients, who wish to remain anonymous, wanted to see what she could do before committing to a full remodel of the four-bedroom, four-bathroom home. They hired her in April 2016 to work on a living room that had been converted from the garage and transform it into a room for the husband. With two young daughters, he wanted his own, masculine space.

Working with a tight budget, May didn’t do much structural work. The existing closet doors and built-in shelving were left alone, but the room got a fresh coat of gray paint. May selected a shade that’s warm, but with a tint of inky blue to create a swanky, lounge-y mood. She designed a simple walnut TV/media unit that evokes the original mid-century design and backed it with art deco, Kelly Wearstler wallpaper to add some funky charm.

She removed the skylight and added a contemporary chandelier to add to the moody feel of the husband’s room. To stretch the budget, she placed six cube-shaped bronze mirror end tables together to make a coffee table.

“The bronze mirror is one of my signature things,” May said. “It’s not bright and reflective so it

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REMODEL OPENS DARK, WOOD-CLAD HOME



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The original fireplace hood, designed by Sim Bruce Richards, the architect of the home, creates a focal point in the living room (top). The project started with the remodel of a room designed for the husband (above).



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To create a brighter interior, the wood paneling was removed and the space was painted white. Christie May of Rockwell Interiors redesigned the kitchen and opened it to the living room by replacing a wall with bar seating.

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takes on that moodier feel.”

A few months after completing the room, May’s clients were ready to move forward with the next phase of the remodel, which covered the main living room, kitchen, dining room, entry, powder room and hallway.

“Their only requests were lighter and brighter,” May said of the project that was completed at the end of 2017. The original home was almost completely clad in wood, and May compared it to a cave. And, typical of older homes, the layout was closed and split up, with the kitchen separate from the rest of the home.

May worked out a way to reorient the kitchen and open it to the living room. She removed the pantry and rotated the placement of the original island, creating direct access to the kitchen from the foyer. Most of the wall



In the kitchen, May paired white elements with darker accents, such as the dark oak for the base of the island. “I felt the house wasn’t a pristine white house,” she said.

between the kitchen and living room also was removed and replaced with a dark marble counter that serves as bar seating.

Her clients originally wanted a white kitchen, but May said, “I

felt the house wasn’t a pristine white house.” She proposed adding contrast by carefully combining white with darker accents. The cabinets are white lacquer and the island has a white marble waterfall counter. To offset that,

May used dark marble for the backsplash and bar seating counter and a dark oak for the bases of the island and bar. “We created a happy medium be-

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tween the different elements and aesthetics to create a unique kitchen,” May said. The same aesthetic was applied to the powder room, which was updated with a modern white sink, black fixtures and black and brass accents.

Lighting was a challenge throughout the 3,500-square-foot home. The open ceiling in the living room meant there were few options to add recessed lighting. The owners had previously replaced the roof and added wiring in a few places for lighting, but May wanted more options. After some searching, she found slim LED can lights that only required two inches of space, so she dropped a shallow false ceiling between the beams (which were painted white). She also added clerestory windows over the sliding doors to the backyard to bring in more natural light, which brightened the dining area.

The kitchen had a low ceiling

with fluorescent tube lighting, which was removed and replaced with a large chandelier. “The horizontal design allowed us to go big without needing so much height,” she said.

In the living room, the first task was to remove the wood cladding and give it some fresh paint. May wanted to add a window seat next to the fireplace, so she replaced the adjacent sliding glass doors with a window and added a ledge out from the fireplace to create a seat that’s deep enough to almost be a daybed. She kept the original fireplace but replaced the brick with concrete that extends to the ceiling and added a stone slab hearth, which becomes the base for the window seat.

It was agreed from the start that the original copper hood for the fireplace, designed by Richards, would be restored and incorporated in the design. Now, it creates a stunning focal point for the room and is a reminder of the architect who built the home.

Allison Keltner is a San Diego based freelance writer.



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The updated powder room now has a midcentury feel with a modern flair with the addition of black fixtures and black and brass accents to the white sink and walls.

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