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GROOVE-IN CONDITION

Two designers turn a blah Beverly Hills house into the coolest spread on the block—in record time

BY ALEXANDRIA ABRAMIAN-MOTT
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PESEN + MUNK

The architectural term “contemporary transitional” exudes all the personality of milk toast. And in the case of this five-bedroom, seven-bath spread of a house perched atop a mini-mountain in Benedict Canyon, the diagnosis was simple: a serious case of the blahs. There were no hand-carved crown moldings, no warbling paneled windows, and no vintage fixtures to melt a designer’s heart. Instead, most of the eye candy came in the form of drop-dead views: floor-to-ceiling windows that look onto rolling vistas of sage-colored oak trees, soaring hawks and moody clouds without another house in sight. Who could tell Beverly Hills hustled just five minutes away?

But if the knock-out surroundings were the selling point for the Rosenbergs—a young, just-married couple who love to travel, but have yet to amass on-the-road collections—the task of saving up the insides fell to Josh and Ryan Brown, the Los Angeles-based brother decorating duo of Brown Design. Their mission: To create some definition for the focal-

BEIGE BEFORE BEAUTY: In the living room/bar area, designers Josh and Ryan Brown used the Italian limestone fireplace as a launching point for a soothing palette of soft textures. A BAR Italia Metropolitan chair from Diva hops up the bar area, while a pair of vintage chairs from Lawson-Perkins in the living area are designed for kicking back.





challenged floor plan, so liven up the palette, and to bring some fun into the mix.

Oh, and make it snappy.

"This was their first house together as a married couple and they wanted to move in pretty quickly," says Ryan, who has appeared in the TV show *Flipping Out*. "So we had to get through the first phase and at least furnish it so they could move in after their honeymoon. That was the concept."

The kicker was that neither of the Rosenbergs wanted to bring any furniture from their previous incarnations with them. So the Browns took the blank slate and, in their own words, "ran with it. We had to buy everything, including the art," says Ryan. "A lot of it was about finding great vintage pieces and upholstering them, and then mixing that in

with new pieces and great art so it looked like something that could have come together over the course of years, not months."

Phase one involved creating a look that wouldn't compete with the natural setting of the house. Neither Josh nor Ryan wanted to "out-pop" the outdoors with an in-your-face approach to scene-stealing décor. Instead, they took the natural palette as their starting point, and kept the open-plan rooms stylishly muted in the common areas with soft-toned furniture and lots of natural wood and stone. Case in point: the living room, where a limestone fireplace sets the tone with a series of pale-hued textiles that upholster new and vintage pieces. Or the upstairs master bedroom, which the brothers say is "Visually, the quietest in the house," with just a whisper of plush, cream-colored bedding.

Clockwise from top left: Josh and Ryan Brown relax poolside. In the guest room, a Lawson-Fleming-designed patchwork credenza plays off the can't-miss Mandara Series wallpaper from Osborne & Little. In the downstairs guest bathroom, Osborne & Little's Quirle wallpaper is paired with vintage Italian lighting purchased through Paul Marz. **Opposite page:** In the guest room, a Browns Design custom four-poster bed is flanked by a pair of lamps from Mexico Gardens.



What was once the poolroom became the hookah room, complete with a daybed and a yurt's worth of Moroccan-inspired throw pillows.

rugs and drapery. "This really had to be both a physical and visual retreat from the rest of the house," says Ryan.

When it came to distinguishing the house's separate spaces, the Browns thought way outside of the home-builder box. "When you first walk into the house, there's one great big room," says Ryan. "What we needed to do was define some sense of an entryway, so you don't just walk into the entire house." The solution came in the form of a massive sculpture made from reclaimed house beams found on the Borneo Islands. It's

a series of soaring trunks that effectively create a post-modern foyer.

The Browns successfully completed phase one in five months, and the Rosenbergs comfortably settled into their new home.

And then came the hookah.

After traveling to Jordan, the Rosenbergs brought a water tobacco hookah back home with them. The Browns saw the brass contraption with its snaking coils and burnished beauty, and the inspiration for phase two was born.

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hookah rooms, complete with a daybed, dreamy wallpaper, and a yun's worth of Moroccan-inspired throw pillows. "We based all the colors on that room on the hookah," says Josh. "And then we put various patterned wallpapers in seven other rooms including the media room, two bathrooms and the upstairs guest room, in some cases even extending wallpaper onto the ceiling. It adds a level of depth that you don't necessarily get from paint."

What also added depth, and plenty of personality, was vintage lighting that the Browns

installed throughout the house during phase two. Gone is the soulless recessed wantage; in its place are über-groovy Italian pieces from the '60s and '70s that give the square-edged house a subtle feel of funk. "We really focused on using a lot of great lighting to bring a sense of texture and personality throughout the house," says Josh. "It's something we extended to every room in the house."

Add to that a knock-out art collection that the Browns and Rosenbergs have steadily built, and what was once a property that only sang the blats, is suddenly taking center stage. »

Above: In the erstwhile poolroom, the mood is set by Osborne & Little Summer Palace wallpaper. The daybed is custom designed by Brown Design. **Opposite page, bottom:** In the dining room, a vintage Saarinen table is surrounded by vintage dining chairs from Empire covered in F. Schumacher fabric. Vintage chandelier from Downtown. Art by Brian Wills. **Opposite page, top:** In the stairwell, Bocci lights are from Interior Division, Los Angeles.