

A photograph of a sunroom with a large chandelier, a round table with a patterned rug, and a red sofa.

MID-CENTURY

Modernists

A team of design
experts and visionaries
infuses a contemporary
home with sophistication
and a dash of humor.

BY LINDA BACHRACK
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BETH SINGER



In the living room, revelers in Dominic Detore's triptych float above a baby grand piano, modern Baker furniture and Tom Verwest's signature stainless steel balls.

Right: An atrium-like hallway connects the living room to the master bedroom.



It was deceiving at first glance. When Richard Spehar and Joe Maniaci stepped inside their mid-20th-century house in Bloomfield Hills, they tried to envision angular, expansive rooms perfect for displaying their art collection, and optimal for entertaining. The property was ideal; the house was dismal.



Left: Custom Eurocraft maple cabinets, a quilted stainless steel backsplash, granite countertops and Brazilian cherry floors highlight the kitchen. An industrial island table and blue Morgantown crystal add visual interest.

Below: A collection of Fulper glazed pottery graces glass shelves in the master bath.

The transformation of the small, ranch-style house was no small task. Luckily Richard and Joe, real estate developers and principals of Cherry Creek Builders, knew just the team to put together to make their vision happen — they hired architect Elissa Scrafano, principal of Scrafano Architects in Los Angeles, Chicago and Southfield, and designer Tom Verwest, of TVI in Royal Oak. The four sat down and collaborated, leaving no detail to chance. Scrafano demolished the original house, salvaging only the fireplace. The result is authentic mid-century modern at its finest.

With a foothold in the 1950s, the home includes such identifying architectural features as a glass-lined hallway connecting the living room to the master bedroom; the original, massive stone-clad central fireplace; and, the icon of '50s living, a bar built into a corner of the living room. The exterior's long, low profile, extensive use of fieldstone, stucco and steel, and prodigious planting of natural grasses, give it a California contemporary feel.

And Richard and Joe embrace that chic, yet laid-back, L.A. lifestyle. The black Kohler & Campbell baby grand and the wall-size, decadent Dominic Dettore triptych in the main living area hint at the no-holds-barred parties the guys often host here. Guests enter beneath crystal-swagged chandeliers from the old downtown Hudson's store, and gather around the Philippe Starck dining table, perch on the wrap-around stone hearth, or migrate to the kitchen/den. "Many of our parties end up around the pool and on the terrace," says Richard.

Powder-blue wide-striped armchairs, from Baker's archetype collection designed by Michael Vanderbyl, complement a pale blue sofa and square, contemporary coffee table in the living room. The table was custom made by Michigan artist Charles Phipps. All four pieces sit atop an Art Deco Tibetan rug. The furniture's quiet formality provides stark contrast to the drama of the room's artwork, including the riotous triptych and an equally profound painting by

Israeli artist Ehuva Weiss. Leucos crystal light fixtures float over the bar and adjacent kitchen counters.

A stone wall and glass walkway connects the living room to the master bedroom and library, and is highlighted by Verwest's custom-designed cubicles displaying Richard and Joe's impressive crystal collection, including pieces by Steuben, Baccarat and Murano. An Eileen Gray cigarette table and vivid purple velvet Goodman Charleston chair (continued on page 58)





“I lucked into the Frank Carino illustrations at a Boston estate sale,” says Richard.

Left: In the master bedroom, the bed cozies next to a stone fireplace.

Above: In the library — purple velvet, crystal and an Eileen Gray cigarette table.

add sexiness to the study, while the bedroom, with its massive, traditional Louis Philippe Grange bed, stone fireplace, Deco leather chair and needlepoint rug, feels more like a suite in a secluded country inn. Sterling silver Art Nouveau candlesticks and a series of charcoal illustrations by Frank Carino personalize the space. "I lucked into the illustrations at a Boston estate sale," says Richard.

The spacious and open kitchen is primarily the domain of house manager Elizabeth Hambleton. "I'm like a wife who goes home at 5 p.m.," says Elizabeth. "They're my angels."

"Elizabeth runs the show," says Richard. "She's *our* guardian angel." The young Ms. Hambleton keeps the house and its inhabitants in order and running smoothly. She shops, cooks, cleans, throws parties, schedules appointments, straightens ties and lends a sympathetic ear. It's Elizabeth who knows just which custom-built Eurocraft cabinet holds the water pitcher or the sugar bowl. She keeps the stainless steel appliances sparkling and the Brazilian cherry floors polished. But she's treated like a valued member of the family, sharing meals and confidences with Richard and Joe.

When modernism embraces the '50s, the result is a juxtaposition of cool and warm, edgy and elegant. And the mix is anything but boring. How could it be ... with this dynamic cast of characters? □

The multi-level terrace and lush pool area can be viewed from most rooms in the home.

Joe Maniaci, Elizabeth Hambleton, Richard Spehar and designer Tom Verwest enjoy a casual lunch on the pool deck.

