



BEST WHOLE HOUSE REMODEL

Architecture/Interior Design: Bill Bocken

Contractor: Dakini Engineering-General Contractor

Homeowners: Bryan Leigh and Tom Hutchings

Tired to Triumphant

BY PHYLLIS VAN DOREN | PHOTOGRAPHY BY SHELLEY METCALF

PERCHED ON TOP OF THIS STEEP almost unbuildable half-acre in Mission Hills, the original home on this site was lauded more than 30 years ago for its avant-garde structural system of pole and wood-beam construction that provided framed support for the whole house. The architect in 1978 was Stuart MacArthur Resor. By the time architect Bill Bocken was invited in by the current homeowners, Bryan Leigh and Tom Hutchings, they had already lived in the home nearly 10 years, having purchased it in the

The kitchen of this remodeled Mission Hills home has views across Mission Valley. The original beam and pole framework has been sealed and painted black. New white walls, both dark and white cabinetry and sleek stainless-steel brighten the area and add contrast to the dark beams and poles.









year 2000. Leigh is an oncologist and chief medical officer for Tracon Pharmaceuticals. Hutchings is a retired land-use planner.

“The design was very daring and innovative when it was first built,” says Bocken, but now it was dark, dreary and depressing. The all-wood interior and cramped spaces were claustrophobic. The only vertical plane was a small interior circular stair.

“They wanted advice on the kitchen initially but I looked at it holistically. I saw a huge potential that would allow us to exploit the structural system and totally open it up to the spectacular view and wooded hillside.”

The existing telephone pole and beam structure would allow for the majority of the walls that were dividing up the space and keeping it dark inside to be totally removed. The creosoted utility poles were encased in huge concrete caissons buried deep in the hillside. “Those footings go to China,” says Bocken.

Bocken widened the openings, took out all old doors and windows and replaced them with glass that spans floor to ceiling.

Opposite: Looking down into the home at night from the entry gate at street level you see, left to right, living room, dining area and kitchen, all in an open plan.

Above: View of the family room on the lower level looks through to an intimate courtyard complete with fireplace and new staircase leading down from the upper level.



“Here the architect took on the challenge of working with a highly stylized house, and in doing so, made it not only better but current again.”

RANDY HANNA



This flooded the interior with light and brought in all the views. To make room for installation of modern lighting, electrical and data systems, the interior wood finishes were removed. New white walls and ceilings contrast with the newly uncovered poles and beams now sealed and painted a dark charcoal color — hence, no more smell of creosote.

Only 330 square feet were added to the 2,400-square-foot house. The remodel results in two bedrooms, two and one-half baths and a new stair tower leading to the lower-level family room, bar and built-in home office accommodations.

Floors are European white oak with just a simple wax finish transitioning to pale ceramic tile in the patios. These along with the spare but comfortable modern furnishings and light and dark custom cabinetry throughout the house underscore the new light, open feeling of the home.

Because of freeway noise rising from Mission Valley and environmental considerations, the home was heavily insulated and all new

Opposite: A quiet corner for reading and sunning off the living room is like basking in the treetops.

Above: One of the two bedrooms has a similar chaise stationed on the view deck. The dark and white contrast of the interiors is punched up with accents of clear red.



Left: Looking across the dining table to the view of the terraced hillside framed by a window is like looking at a painting.



Right: More sleek minimalism and light and dark contrast in the guest bath.

“A strong gesture in painting the poles and beams dark.”

MARC TARASUCK



Above: A home-office station on the lower level has an outside deck and more views across Mission Valley.

windows and doors thermal paned. Appliances, low-flow plumbing fixtures and a high-efficiency heating system were installed, as well as a new photovoltaic electric-producing roof system.

There was no privacy and no sense of arrival with the old steep entry. The sloping bank was stabilized by a series of stepped retaining walls landscaped by Paul Adams into a stunning feature, one of the favorite aspects of the remodel. “The terraced garden becomes ‘artwork’ when viewed from the interior. The view from the dining room is mesmerizing. You can easily forget where you are,” says juror Laura DuCharme Conboy.

“Instead of taking a wrecking ball approach to a remodel, we came up with more of a surgical approach. The clients were team members for the project. I was the ring leader,” says Bocken.

To be in the home now, you seem to literally float over the spectacular setting while at the same time appreciating the structural frame that holds you aloft. It has become harmoniously serene. ♦