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A REVIVAL IN
Beverlywood

ARCHITECT MICHAEL RACHLIN • RENEWS A TIRED RANCH HOUSE
INTO A JOYFUL COMPLEX | TEXT BY MICHAEL WEBB | PHOTOGRAPHY BY KARYN MILLET



Architect Michael Rachlin transforms a 1950s ranch home in a simple way; by blurring the distinction between traditional and modern, he has reinterpreted the vernacular archetype using a minimalist language. On the south facing façade two free-standing wooden clapboard walls define the entry and enclose the front patio and it is as if the house is a modern-day cottage delineated by geometric forms of the hipped and gabled roofs with a series of occasional cupolas thrown into the mix for added visual interest.



The breakfast room features a Warren Platner table and chairs that are covered in white Spinneybeck leather and illuminated by an abundant amount of daylighting from the custom bay window with mitered glass corners that look directly onto the adjacent golf course.



In the living room the Architect removed the 1950s aluminum sliding glass doors and replaced them with a series of wooden French doors to create an open inviting environment to the outdoor patio. Custom designed matching sofas covered in a white Knoll Textiles Ultrasuede, a pair of Barcelona Chairs covered in white Spinneybeck leather, and a custom designed walnut coffee table set on a white carpet contrast against the highly polished walnut floors.



MICHAEL RACHLIN FOUND his house by chance, driving around Los Angeles on a Sunday afternoon, twenty-two years ago. It was an unlikely choice for a successful architect—a generic 1950s ranch house that was showing its age—but the location was idyllic. Towering pepper trees rose from the banks of a stream and framed a vista over a golf course. The rustic tranquility, disturbed only by massed crows celebrating their happy hour at sundown, persuaded him to take this decayed relic and transform it.

The Northridge earthquake sent the chimney crashing into the shingled roof, broke all the windows, and cracked the pool, while leaving the wood-frame structure intact. Rachlin decided to keep the foundations and outer shell, and remodel everything around and within. To give the house a stronger presence on the quiet street without alarming his neighbors, he constructed a false facade: two clapboarded screen walls that mimic the steeply pitched roof. One frames the entrance, the other an intimate patio. It's a playful gesture, set off by a trio of tall birdhouses, and it finds an echo in the polished wood deck to the rear, which serves as an



Michael Rachlin of Culver City, California based Rachlin Partners

outdoor living room. Lights are suspended from the branches of a tree, and four white polypropylene armchairs—Philippe Starck's witty take on the traditional club chair—form a conversational grouping.

The interior was formerly as drab as the gray exterior, relieved only by the avocado 'fifties kitchen. Rachlin swept all that away, removed partitions, and installed a polished stained walnut floor that contrasts with the white walls and ceilings. He shares Richard Meier's enthusiasm for the purity of white, which contains all the other colors and makes everyone look good. Here, it breathes fresh life into every corner of the house, and makes the tall peaked ceiling vault of the living room feel like a tent. The consistency of the white leather upholstery on the Barcelona and Aluminum Group chairs and the sofas the architect designed, reinforces the easy flow of the open plan.

These improvements made the house more livable, but left the attic as a dark void. The neighborhood housing association mandates pitched roofs but few residents use the space they enclose for anything but storage. Rachlin waited a long time to exploit his, focusing instead on building a practice that specializes in schools,



ABOVE On one end of the master bedroom suite is a linear gas fireplace set into a veneer plaster wall that mimics the peak roof pattern carried throughout the house as a reoccurring theme. A sliding barn door defines the entrance to the bedroom and hides a built in bar setup. In the foreground an Eames Lounge Chair and ottoman covered in white Spinneybeck leather make for a cozy reading spot. **LEFT** A Jacuzzi tub and steam shower is set against a white radiant heat Caesar Stone floor





The master bedroom headboard is a custom made three-dimensional sculptural wall painted with a high gloss white lacquer that defines the separation between the bedroom and bathroom spaces. Set against the white lacquer wall are two Artemide Micro Tolomeo desk lamps used as wall sconce reading lamps. Bedding is by Ralph Lauren—Black Palmer Collection.

A Teak dining table and chairs stained to match the adjacent walnut floors set behind a free-standing clapboard wall define the front patio. Sweeping panoramic views overlooking pepper trees and a golf course create a park-like setting for informal dining.





The rear of the property features a guest house, pool, spa, two raised lpe wooden decks, one with an outdoor fire-pit and another pool deck for outdoor entertaining create a resort-like setting.

healthcare, and the restoration of historic buildings, including LA's City Hall. Remodeling his own house has rekindled his early enthusiasm for residential design. Two years ago, he installed a steel balustraded staircase, and turned the lofty attic into a master suite. He had already reshaped two downstairs rooms for his teenage daughters; here he could indulge his taste for the geometric ordering of space. He pushed out two gables to east and west and lined them with cabinets. The linear skylight provides natural illumination and frames a strip of the sky. A freestanding rippling screen wall composed of shop-milled MDF with three coats of white lacquer separates bed from bathroom, and its profile echoes the peak of the roof.

By taking his time and waiting until he was ready, Rachlin has turned a humble, 2000-square foot house into a joyful complex that is twice as big, counting the upper level, the guest suite in the former garage, and three outdoor living areas. It shows how much can be done without enlarging the footprint of the old or tearing down its walls. **CH**

