

The high-gloss finish that Fine Paints of Europe is known for is achieved through a meticulous multi-step process. Next to one of two Eames lounge chairs is a Cactus floor lamp from Roche Bobois. Milo Baughman tub chair from Thayer Coggin; Minotti coffee table; Equus rug from Stark.



THE EYE OF THE TIGER



A homage to Ali in the foyer: "Ali on Paper-Smoketown Gold," an acrylic and enamel screen print / diamond dust on somerset paper by Russell Young hangs behind "Ali," a carbon fiber sculpture with chrome painting by Brendan Murphy.

Heart and hustle guide an entrepreneur's decisions regarding business and curating a one-of-a-kind art collection for his home.

Written by Bridget Williams / Photography by Robert Burge

Based on outward appearances, this stately Federal-style residence is admirable for its classical proportions that are in keeping with the other grand homes in this gated river bluff enclave. Once you step inside, however, the neighborhood similarities and conventions are left outside.

After considering the scope of the project and the significant changes that the homeowner had in mind, builder Jason Black, owner of Artisan Signature Homes, connected him with Ron Wolz of Bittners, who he knew would be able to articulate his client's vision aptly.

The homeowner's foray into the world of art collecting began after his business partner gifted him with an original painting depicting Muhammad Ali. It's a subject that continues to have a heavyweight presence in his continuing acquisitions, for which he relies on the expertise of Jacquelin Napal, founder of Art Angels, a contemporary art gallery in LA that represents both established and emerging artists. The homeowner said he employs a simple strategy of trusting his instinct and procuring pieces with symbolic significance. For instance, a freestanding bronze sculpture of a mighty rhino suspended within a cube visible as soon as you cross the threshold speaks to the homeowner's nature as a hard-charging entrepreneur.



The contours of the oval-shaped dining room are enhanced by textural squares of overlapping seam Élitis wall covering in varying shades of cobalt. "Nocturnal Approach," an acrylic sculpture painted jet black by Paul Rousso is mounted above the sideboard. Rug from Anabel's Oriental Rugs.

Tigers also play predominantly in both art and interior design. Referring to tigers and rhinos as his "spirit animals," the homeowner said, "Go get 'em tiger," was an encouraging and endearing phrase often uttered by his late father. The reference is just one of many deliberate sentimental design elements.

In devising a backdrop suitable for a vibrant assemblage of sculpture, mixed media, photographs, and paintings, Wolz created spaces that would be equally impactful sans art. Placed on newly laid honed marble floors in the foyer are pair of near-life-sized chromed carbon fiber sculptures by Miami and Malibu-based artist Brendan Murphy. Overhead, a trio of crystal-covered halo chandeliers suspended from a ceiling painting black seems to hover in place.

The existing curved stairway received a facelift in keeping with the home's contemporized perspective. "We kept the classical proportions but pushed them in a modern direction," explained Wolz. Ascending the stairs allows for a closer look at a mixed media painting by former pro baseball player-turned-artist Micah Johnson and an abstraction of the Last Supper by Luis Serrano. The pieces' vastly different subject matter represents the homeowner's varied interests. The second-floor landing is the jumping-off point to explore a haven for kids and kids-at-heart. There's a playroom outfitted to rival an American

Ninja Junior course, complete with a two-story slide and various climbing elements. A cargo net on one end provides access to a dedicated gaming room. A space on the opposite side is a Lego lover's dream.

Back downstairs, directly accessed from the foyer, the walls of the oval-shaped dining room with built-ins are sheathed in textural squares of overlapping seam wall covering from Élitis in subtly varying shades of cobalt. Resembling bunched black fabric, "Nocturnal Approach," an acrylic sculpture painted jet black by Paul Rousso surmounting the sideboard, tempers the exuberance all around. This visual stop sign lets one focus on the room's other admirable attributes, including a wallpapered ceiling inset with gilt accents and a surfboard-shaped stone dining table surrounded by cane chairs with origami-like contours.

In the living room, walnut paneling accentuated by lithe slats defines the television wall and a portion of the ceiling and serves as a recurring design element. A door that opens to a private lounge linked to the primary bedroom is seamlessly integrated within the paneling. No one does contemporary furniture better than the Europeans, so of course Ron selected pieces from the who's who of legendary manufacturers, including Minotti and Roche-Bobois. Jason Black's carpenters created the walnut coffee table positioned in front of the sofa.



The traditional original curved staircase in the foyer was given a facelift to make it more instep with the newly contemporized surroundings. RH Modern crystal Halo chandelier.



The swirling clouds in Fornasetti's Nuvolette wallpaper from Cole & Son applied to the ceiling in the breakfast lounge are amplified by an ethereal Nimbus chandelier from Oly Studio.



"QueenB," a Digital C print by Jenny Boot, dominates a room in the lounge, accessible from either the primary suite or a hidden door in the living room.



In the lower level bar area, a highly textural wall covering from Élitis is punctuated by a lacquered bar and a Eclatant linear chandelier from RH Modern. Stephen Holland's painting "Muhammad Ali Over Liston" is also signed by Ali.



A hidden door in the walnut-paneled wall provides access to a cozy lounge. The Nonette Floor Lamp, Astra armchairs with saffron upholstery, Bergamote armchair and ottoman, and Itinéraire sectional are all from Roche Bobois. The coffee table is a custom piece made by Artisan Signature Homes.



Century Entertainment and Furnishings built the cabinetry for the completely reconfigured kitchen. Jumper stools from Roche Bobois; gas range from Big Chill.



The design of a playroom on the second level rivals the layout of an American Ninja Junior course.



The bed in the primary suite is a custom piece made by the Bittners woodworking shop. Bubble sofa from Roche Bobois at the foot of the bed. Gucci wallpaper: Eclatant chandelier from RH Modern.



The slatted wall detail in the lower level television room is a recurring design element.



Mirror ball pendant lights are suspended from the cove ceiling in the hallway. A life-sized statue of a samurai marks the entrance to the primary suite.



"Mom, Can Astronauts be black?" a mixed media painting by former pro baseball player-turned-artist Micah Johnson hangs in the foyer.



In the lower level, a restored Honda 360 motorcycle is parked beneath "Roll the Dice," a large black and white photograph by David Yarrow

Open to both the living room and breakfast lounge, the floorplan of the kitchen was completely reconfigured to improve functionality. Century Entertainment and Furnishings is responsible for the custom cabinets in the sleek kitchen, whose vertical lines mimic those found in the paneling.

Rather than just apply iconic Fornasetti Nuvolette wallpaper from Cole & Son to the ceiling of the breakfast lounge, which would be interesting enough, particularly when the paper's cloudy sky effect is amplified by the cascading resin "bubbles" of the Oly Studio Nimbus chandelier, Wolz opted to have the enduring design extend one-fourth of the way down the wall. He then took it a step further by having the installers follow the undulating contours of the clouds instead of a straight seam.

No longer a stuffy study of old, the extensive mahogany woodwork in the den received a coat of bold blue paint from Fine Paints of Europe, punctuated by a glass-like lacquered finish applied in a painstaking multi-step process. "Keeping the woodwork intact is a nod to tradition, but adding the color makes it relevant in context with the rest of the house," Wolz explained. Considering the striking closeup photograph hanging between a pair of built-ins and surmounting a sofa with burnt orange upholstery makes "The Tiger's Den" an apt description of the finished space.

Mirror ball pendant lamps lend an ethereal touch to the gallery hall that leads to the entrance of the primary suite, guarded by a life-sized samurai sculpture perfectly placed into an arched niche with raised wainscoting and slat detail on the wall. The

bed was custom-made by Bittners to span the width between two windows that look out to the pool area. Hanging above the bed is another tiger image, this one looking less fierce amid a smattering of daisies. An upholstered ceiling and Gucci's Tiger Print wallpaper amp up the drama.

The lower level is designed to accommodate downtime for adults and children. A deep leather sectional perfect for piling on faces a television wall accented similarly to the living room, but this time the wood slats are painted black. Two massive book-matched slabs of onyx—backlit to dramatic effect—provide the backdrop for a small elevated stage upon which a junior drum set rests.

Opposite the bar, sporting a Kelly green lacquered finish, a restored Honda 360 motorcycle is parked beneath "Roll the

Dice," a large black and white photograph by David Yarrow of a group playing craps as a wolf looks on. The homeowner fondly recalls learning to play craps with his father. Lacking this insider knowledge, a photograph of the homeowner with his dad on a similar (but sadly not the same) motorcycle propped on the seat reveals the intention of the arrangement.

Having caught the collecting bug, the homeowner says he has as much art in storage as he does on the walls. This declaration is good news for Wolz, as the home is still a work in progress, and he's up to the design challenge. "[The homeowner] is not someone who automatically says 'yes' to everything. Instead, he pushes you to test the boundaries of your creativity and what's possible," Wolz added. **sl**