

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

THE INTERNATIONAL DESIGN AUTHORITY

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Smart Moves

**NATE BERKUS +
JEREMIAH BRENT'S
DOMESTIC BLISS**

**HOW AD'S 2015
INNOVATORS
ARE CHANGING
THE WORLD**

**THE U.S. EMBASSY
IN SPAIN
GETS A CHIC
NEW LOOK**

**PLUS
SAN FRANCISCO'S
DESIGN BOOM**







Regardless of the romantic spell they cast, houses with historic good looks can be stifling to decorate.

Pediments, paneling, and parquet—whether period authentic or a later pastiche—suggest to many people that the furnishings should follow classical suit. Interior designer Bruce Budd is not among them. To him, even the most traditional architectural envelope sings when outfitted with “a confidant mix of history and contemporary design,” a melding that speaks of today while being enriched by the past.

Proof of this well-rounded philosophy is a chic house that the Manhattan-based Budd decorated for a businessman in Houston’s plush River Oaks enclave. The five-bedroom dwelling was completed in 1933 by John F. Staub, the Texas architect who peppered the state with residential masterworks such as Bayou Bend, a Houston mansion that was built just a few years earlier for oil heiress Ima Hogg and her brothers and is now one of America’s leading decorative arts museums. Though more modest in scale, the address that Budd took in hand is equally appealing: a café-society evocation of a 17th-century English redbrick manor. Staub designed the house so that its rear façade is oriented toward the street, a conceit that keeps the main entrance secluded while a parklike expanse of lawn offers curb appeal. The architect also punctuated the structure’s public side with a scrolling central gable—echoing one he’d admired on a trip to England in 1929—and clipped a small iron balcony to the second floor like a lacy brooch.

“We added numerous doors and windows to open up the interiors but maintained Staub’s façade and his plaster

walls,” the homeowner says of the renovation, which Budd oversaw in coordination with Bute King Architects. Reverence aside, designer and client still fully intended to rock Staub’s elegant world, inside and out. First-time visitors are stopped in their tracks when they pass through an opening in the garden’s tall hedges and encounter a polished-steel Anish Kapoor sculpture that resembles a lethally sharp Hershey’s Kiss—an artwork that must be cleaned with distilled water before sunrise to avoid spots. “It’s entirely incongruous,” the owner says of the piece, calling it “a contemporary statement that catches you by surprise in old-world surroundings.”

The interiors spark a similar frisson. Despite the home’s Georgian-style cornices, Louis XV boiserie (added by the previous owners as part of a ’70s expansion), and abundant antiques, an up-to-the-minute swagger prevails. In the entrance hall, for example, a swirl of blackened steel by sculptor Beverly Pepper tops a robust marble console from the 1800s. “Early on I imagined a modern mix—perhaps a Jean Royère chair or two and handwoven raffia-and-cotton carpets,” says Budd, best known for his association with the late heiress Bunny Mellon, for whom he worked on houses from Cape Cod to Antigua. “But the more the client and I talked, the more I came to appreciate his interest in antiques, from Louis XVI painted chairs to Regency library tables.”

The homeowner, however, cautioned that he didn’t want a *retardataire* atmosphere or reminders of his previous home. →