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Mid-Century Modern Meets 21st-Century Contemporary

Design-builder Kevin Cozen used a light touch to marry elements of past and present in this whole-house remodel of a Los Angeles canyon home.

By [Laura McNulty](#)

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For Kevin Cozen, founder of Santa Monica-based design-build firm Classical Progression, the whole-house renovation of a mid-century modern canyon house in Beverly Hills was a golden opportunity to combine past with present.

Using older and recycled materials for contemporary design is a key tenet of Cozen's overall design philosophy, even inspiring his

firm name. And it was perhaps especially important in this project, which was built by the former owner's husband in the 1950s.

“She really hated the idea of somebody coming in and ripping this house down or turning it into something that it wasn’t,” Cozen says. “The idea was to respect the past and keep a lot of the integrity and materials of the existing house.”

To that end, Cozen preserved features like the original tongue-and-groove ceiling and free-floating staircase, along with authentic décor items like light fixtures and glass from the patio. The most important element, however, was respecting the mid-century modern character while making the home more functional for 21st-century living.

“The floor plan didn’t really function,” Cozen says. “It didn’t have a master suite at all; it had three or four tiny little bedrooms and a couple of baths that were so small you could hardly be in them and close the door.”

Cozen gave the house what he calls a “bullet-proof” plan, with an open first-floor living area and an expansive master suite. He also added a versatile space on the upper level that could be used as a den, office, or additional bedroom. That room opens up to a large deck, as does the main living area, while each bedroom has its own patio.

“There’s a lot of interaction with the outdoor spaces,” Cozen says. “In this wooded area of Beverly Glen, the outdoor space is really kind of beautiful.”

As part of that interaction, it was also important to bring the outdoors into the house itself—a challenge for the canyon site. “Canyon houses tend to be dark and this was no different, so we needed to really maximize the glazing to bring in as much light as possible,” Cozen says.

That included adding a large window in the kitchen, which brightened the room but also reduced the space available for storage. Cozen chose to run cabinets in front of the window and use glass on both sides so the natural light is diffused into the kitchen.

The kitchen's open, airy feeling is complemented cabinets hung over the peninsula island using thin metal bracketry. Walnut cabinetry and oak wood floors help add warmth, one reason Cozen says he loves to mix old pieces into his modern designs.

The result is a home that pays homage to its mid-century roots while still benefiting from a contemporary update. It ultimately sold to a young couple seeking a mid-century modern home that was authentic to the iconic style, Cozen says. “When they saw this one, they loved it. Whenever you can work on a project where there’s good feelings like that all around, it’s a great opportunity.”

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