

# MLK Studio

By Abigail Stone  
Photos by Roger Davies

**THERE ARE CERTAIN** hallmarks that identify an interior designer as a standout. Among these is their ability to create a large home that feels both majestic and intimate, fresh and timeless. Meg Joannides of Los Angeles-based MLK Studio easily manages these feats in the homes she oversees. A quick glance at this Brentwood project reinforces her much-deserved reputation for designing impeccable spaces that are modern in spirit, classically proportioned, elegant and livable.

Joannides was traveling with her family when she received a message from her longtime clients wondering when she'd be returning to Los Angeles. Avid tennis players, they'd found a property with a tennis court, a feature that was on their bucket list for some time, and were eager to embark on constructing their dream

house. In place of the existing ranch home, they pictured an open-plan space that welcomed their frequent parties. With three children mostly out of the house, the couple wanted a home that felt spacious without feeling cavernous. "It had to have a soul," says Joannides.

Joannides spearheaded the search for an architect, zeroing in on Bobby McAlpine of McAlpine. The husband was skeptical about hiring a non-local firm; what did an Alabama-based architect understand about the tenets of design, including the seamless merging of indoors and out, that underline life in Southern California? "The husband thought this was crazy," says Joannides. "We had to really twist his arm." She encouraged the couple to take a trip to see a home McAlpine had done in Napa Valley. Their reaction proved her instincts correct.



**OPPOSITE PAGE:** A chandelier by Herve Van Der Straeten mimics the lines of the steel-framed doors. **THIS PAGE:** A pair of Troscan lounge chairs are flanked by Christian Liaigre sofas.









“They instantly fell in love and could tell from the feeling of the house that he would be the right fit for them,” says the designer. With McAlpine on board, Joannides’ work could begin in earnest.

“The way I work on new construction is that I concentrate on the interior architecture first without the furniture really playing a big role,” says Joannides. “Spatially, I knew how things were going to look, but it evolves as I start with the kitchen and the bathroom. I knew I couldn’t do another white kitchen!” Instead, she envisioned an inviting space that relied on texture. That included Calacatta Lincoln marble surfaces, wide-plank floors and leather seating balanced by Lindsey Adelman’s ethereal lighting. “The wife and I knew we wanted rustic materials while the husband wanted a traditional exterior.” Plaster walls, fumed, wire-brushed floors, limestone, reclaimed timber posts and beams and wood ceilings varnish the home

with warmth. Juxtaposed against these details, clean and modern features—walls that meet the floor with a reveal rather than a baseboard; glass and steel-framed casement windows and doors—layer in depth. “It was a constant play of marrying these materials against each other to keep it intriguing,” says Joannides. “There are no unnecessary elements, just enough to make it crisp and interesting.”

Underlining the dance between classic and contemporary are a myriad of small but significant details: extending the height of the pocketing doors, like the one that separates the kitchen from the breakfast room, to the ceiling so that they disappear when open; the black crackle finish on the cabinets in the built-in bar; and the gold-leaf ceiling in the downstairs powder room, all of which confirm the home’s feeling of enduring elegance.

As the backdrop came into focus, Joannides

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Pendants by Lindsey Adelman shed light on the second island.

**THIS PAGE:** A satin, khaki paint covers the walls and molding in an elegant powder room; a Lindsey Adelman chandelier hangs above a breakfast table by Lisa.





**THIS PAGE, TOP:** In the office, a pair of Anna Karlin sconces and Phillip Jeffries wallcovering add texture.

**BOTTOM:** The designer used skateboard decks as art in the kid's bedroom.

**OPPOSITE PAGE, LEFT:** A custom floor-to-ceiling mirror was installed to make a powder room feel more expansive. **RIGHT:** Joannides built a custom bar, accessible from the office.



turned her attention to the furniture. “It starts about a year into construction,” says Joannides, who relies on Pinterest to organize her ideas. “I knew it would have a modern but classic sort of appeal with vintage, custom and new pieces mixed in.” Custom furniture, including the first floor’s streamlined sofas, covered in a linen from Holly Hunt, designed by MLK Studio and crafted in Los Angeles, is augmented with showroom pieces and vintage finds. “The wife has almost a little bit of a masculine taste in a very beautiful way with clean silhouettes.”

Enhancing the main floor’s undulating design are interlocking spaces that unfurl toward the backyard and that tennis court; the spaces are unified by neutral colors that put focus on the changing landscape seen

through the disappearing back wall. “I was really conscientious of the symmetry and the proportion. It’s those elements working together that make it successful,” Joannides muses.

Upstairs the same tensions between modern and classic, grounded and ethereal, cozy and spacious continue. “I’m not really married to one style. Even if I’m doing modern, it has a more eclectic vibe,” says Joannides. In the son’s room that translates to an Eames chair paired with a wall of skateboard decks and in a powder room, a substantial limestone sink is paired with a delicate floral wallpaper. “Since I was a kid, I wanted to be an interior designer,” says Joannides, “but my parents tried to talk me out of it.” Luckily, that didn’t work.





**THIS PAGE, TOP:** A Holly Hunt bed sits below a chandelier by Fortuny.  
**BOTTOM:** Joannides worked with Marc Castle to adorn the outdoor seating and dining area. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** A Gabriel Scott pendant floats above a freestanding tub in the soothing master bathroom.

