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PALM SPRINGS HAD its Golden Age. During that era in the 1950s and 60s when stars such as Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, Dinah Shore and others made the desert town their home away from their Los Angeles homes, Palm Springs became not only a glamorous locale, but also one in which the mid-century Modern house flourished. Some claim that it was born there. But Palm Springs's glory days are far from over, especially when the likes of designer Michael Smith adds his imprint there.

Upon undertaking the interior design for a classic, circa-1960 mid-century Modern home owned by longtime friends of his, Smith says, "A lot of sophisticated people lived in Palm Springs during its Golden Age, and we wanted to reflect that sophistication in these interiors in a way that says, 'We are people of the world,' rather than creating a cliché of what the town is supposed to be."

Apart from the furnishings, accessories, and artworks Smith chose for the project, he had ample free use of air and sky, two of Palm Springs's most abundant attributes. The house, situated high up in the Coachella Valley, was so thoroughly renovated at the time of sale that it was essentially a new house. "It's at a high altitude," says the Los Angeles-based Smith, "with a view down to the valley below. There's really beautiful air movement up there, a bit of a breeze, along with a great view. Ultimately, a view really does affect your quality of life."

The single-story structure had originally been configured as an open C shape until Smith and his clients decided to add a bedroom that closed the form, creating a glass-framed interior courtyard. That outdoor room of sorts features a modern sculpture visible from several perspectives within the home, while the comfortably furnished interior rooms Smith created for his friends work as a series of inviting, gallery-like spaces in which the couple relaxes, entertains, and enjoys their eclectic art collection.

Smith insists that working with friends isn't particularly different from working with other clients. "You may approach the starting point with more information when

"Because anything can be defined as 'a style,' I developed the interiors in the context of what living in a desert means."

—*Michael Smith*

working with friends, and they may trust you more, but it's not a radical departure from working with any other clients. The pitfalls are the same for everyone. It's really just about being sensitive to what people say and listening very carefully."

It's not every client, though, who gets the privilege to work with Smith. Over the years, he has received numerous honors and awards for his work, including being invited in 2008 to design the private White House quarters for the Obamas, a commission that led to his appointment to the Committee for the Preservation of the White House and an invitation to redesign the Oval Office itself. Then as now, Smith adhered to the same philosophy that has earned him respect throughout the design community and among his international clientele: "Live with what you love."

"I really don't strive for perfection," Smith insists. "Having an emotional connection to the things that surround us in

Opening page: Michael S. Smith designed the pool and interiors of a mid-century Modern house in Palm Springs. Janus et Cie chaise lounges, upholstered with Delany & Long fabric, are grouped with a Santa Barbara Designs umbrella in a Sunbrella fabric. **Left:** The living room features a Spanish baroque mirror, Jasper ottomans covered in suede, and a P. Tendercool coffee table.