



## One foot in the doorway and the architectural pedigree was clear – this was undoubtedly the work of the master Horace Trumbauer.

The elegant details, the graceful flow, the unerring proportions and the unfolding of vistas all confirmed that this was Classicism at its finest. Our new client was an intriguing collaborator full of passion and exuberance, undaunted by the extent of the work demanded by this grande dame of a house. While so many others were abandoning the glamorous architectural masterpieces of what can only be called the New American Renaissance of the early 20th-century, this young man ventured out on an altogether different path. As a product of a philanthropic family known for bold, creative initiatives, he approached restoration and collecting with the same energy and vigor. The original intent was to complete only the family room, kitchen and bedroom, slowly allowing him to get a sense for how the house lived. However, the instant the conceptual plans were presented, he was captivated by the possibilities and the whirlwind began. Soon there were 32 rooms underway and recreating intricate plaster ceilings, restoring elegant marble mantles and refurbishing inlaid floors became a consuming labor of love. This abundant enthusiasm overflowed into the grounds as well, reclaiming for them a sense of scale and dignity since much of the surrounding acreage had recently been lost to residential subdivision. Herculean landscaping efforts using seemingly endless supply of 100-year-old trees created a wonderful cocoon for the house and its gardens, pools, fountains and koi pond.

As the construction dust was in glorious full-billow, we turned our attention to collecting. Never had I met such a quick study, nor someone with such broad aesthetic interests. It wasn't enough just to fill the spaces with pretty things; the house had a strength of character that demanded the robust, the significant and the exemplary. It was a match well made – man

and house – and his unquenchable thirst for knowledge and limitless energy responded in perfect unison with possibilities ahead. Here was a confident risk-taker who loved the pace, spontaneity and pressure of acquiring great works at auction, while giving thoughtful consideration to aesthetic value, uniqueness and an inherent sense of “rightness.” By wisely tapping the collective curatorial genius at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and working with the most important decorative arts dealers here and abroad, the collection quickly gained depth and significance.

Throughout the course of the transcontinental acquisition adventure there were magical moments of unexpected serendipity. Imagine finding a rare pair of Karabaugh Kellehs for the long hall one year and one ocean apart or acquiring Gianni Versace's extraordinary guest bedroom furniture the day after we had vowed to create the ultimate masculine bedroom. Or miraculously discovering a pair of large 19th-century Baccarat bronze doré mounted cut crystal vases with the same decorative motif as that which appeared in the plaster ceiling detail. Far from creating a false “instant history,” his collection celebrated the exotic, the unexpected and the truly personal.

Personal expression, then, is the ultimate hallmark of this collector, a true gentleman from first to last. He is as appreciated for spontaneously building roaring fires out of construction debris during frosty mid winter restoration meetings as he is for creating a buoyant environment that welcomed a continual flow of parties, dogs and friends. This is indeed a house that passion built.

Eberlein Design Consultants Ltd. has been widely published in trade and consumer press. The firm has received 26 awards for design excellence by the American Society of Interior Designers and Mrs. Eberlein was the recipient of their “Designer of Distinction” award. Ms. Eberlein is a sought after lecturer on classical architecture and design and is also the current chapter president of the Institute of Classical Architecture & Classical America.

Barbara Eberlein  
Interior Designer  
February 2011