

california

HOME+DESIGN

TALES OF THE CITY

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Kenneth Brown designed
this L.A. loft for himself
before turning it over to
a friend and client, p. 1

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LOS ANGELES
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SACRAMENTO
LIBESKIND'S
VIEW FROM
THE TOP

SAN FRANCISCO
ART DECO IN NOE
HILL + MODERN
IN NOE VALLEY

san francisco

A CRAFTY MIX

A COUPLE OF ARCHITECTS RENOVATED THEIR CLASSIC CRAFTSMAN, THEN ASKED DESIGNER STEVEN MILLER TO HELP GIVE IT A FEW UNEXPECTED FLOURISHES.

BY JEAN VICTOR PHOTOGRAPHY BY CESAR RUBIO STYLING BY GARY SPAIN/ARTIST UNITED

The architects, Elizabeth Kerman-Morris and Toby Morris, hang out on the front steps with their children, Emily and Tucker. The original shingle-and-brick facade changed little during the renovation, but the interior was completely restored.



In the dining room, klismos chairs upholstered in red leather with brass nailhead detailing and a custom Neidhardt pendant play off the Craftsman feel of the original woodwork and glass cabinetry.

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resh" is the first word that comes to mind when architects Elizabeth Kerman-Morris and Toby Morris open the door to their 1909 Craftsman home in San Francisco's Parnassus Heights neighborhood. Perhaps it's the carrot-colored velvet on the sofa, the bold ebony-and-white print on the wingback chair or the way the light—even on a foggy day—filters through the trees in the garden and bounces off the white oak floors. When the couple decided to renovate the four-story Cole Valley home they share with their two children (Emily, 12, and Tucker, 10), they were intent on restoring the period details that had been stripped in a 1970s remodel. But they didn't want to be quite as reverential to the past with the furnishings, especially since this was a family house where pillows would most definitely end up out of place.

In the living room, a bold print on a wingback chair strikes a modern note, as does the velvet upholstery in orange and moss green. French doors lead to a new deck overlooking the back garden.

The family lived in the house for six years before starting the restoration, giving them plenty of time to watch leaks drip and finishes peel, and to dream about the possibilities. Enter San Francisco designer Steven Miller, who is known to take his cues from history—and then take it up a notch by introducing the unexpected. "There's a robust quality to the detailing of the house, and I wanted to meet that with a new vision," says Miller. "Rather than sticking with the Shingle-style interiors you'd expect to see, I wanted to create a style that hearkens back to some of the historical aspects of the house but also brings it into the future." His vision was exactly what the Kerman-Morris clan had in mind.

Though the shingled facade of the house remained unchanged, the interior was essentially gutted and the attic space on the fourth floor was converted to a master suite. "We didn't add a lot of square footage," says Kerman-Morris, "but we maximized the space we already had, reconfiguring walls and pushing out the back with things like a window seat and a breakfast nook."

To maintain the original character of the house, they salvaged the cornice in the entry and copied



New built-in bookcases flanking the fireplace in the living room are in keeping with the original 1909 architecture of the house. An A. Rudin chair swivels to take in views of downtown San Francisco.



A photograph of a kitchen featuring dark-stained white oak cabinetry with a honed French limestone countertop. The kitchen includes a sink with a modern faucet, a toaster, and a wooden stool. The ceiling is lit with circular fixtures. A doorway in the background shows a glimpse of another room with a chair and a vase of flowers.

*“There’s a robust
quality to the detailing
of the house.”*

Warm finishes in the kitchen include white oak cabinets with a dark stain and honed French limestone counters. The ceiling fixtures are by Estiluz.

it in the living room, extending the spirit of the original moldings to the trims around the French doors and transom windows. But instead of playing it safe and furnishing the room with, say, Stickley pieces, Miller mixed it up with bright colors and oversize prints. Playing off the orange sofa are two moss green velvet swivel chairs, which spin around (and around, much to Tucker's delight) to take in the postcard view of downtown San Francisco.

The dining room, with its original redwood wainscoting, cabinets and ceiling beams, was "kept pretty much intact," says Morris, but then laughs as he recalls the room in the throes of the remodel. "There was a point during construction when water was pouring through the ceiling, and the walls and floors were completely trashed," he explains. "All the finishes were removed and replaced or refreshed."

Miller furnished the room with a big, round Prouvé table, then countered the room's club-like atmosphere with klismos chairs upholstered in tomato-red leather. "The use of nailheads and leather are period," says Miller, "but the shape and color of the chairs pushes it a little, and I think gives the room deeper complexity." A black-and-white checked rug underfoot picks up on the geometry in the multi-paned French door and adds a crisp touch to the room.

First to go in the kitchen were the buzzing fluorescent lights and standard mahogany veneer cabinets, which were replaced by oak cabinets reaching to the ceiling with clean-lined Craftsman detailing and a warm finish. Space taken up by an outdoor stair was recaptured and turned into a banquette, elevated on a platform to take advantage of the views. The seats, which Miller designed with an ergonomic pitch for comfort, are covered in faux leather for easy cleaning—just one of many nods to having children in the house. Stairs lead down to a new first-floor studio apartment, a fun escape for the kids and their friends.

Upstairs, Emily and Tucker got to have their say when it came to choosing colors for their own rooms (cheerful purples and greens, respectively). But the hues turn understated and serene on the floor above, where the attic was expanded into a master suite, complete with a deck for enjoying the city views. "We wanted the space to

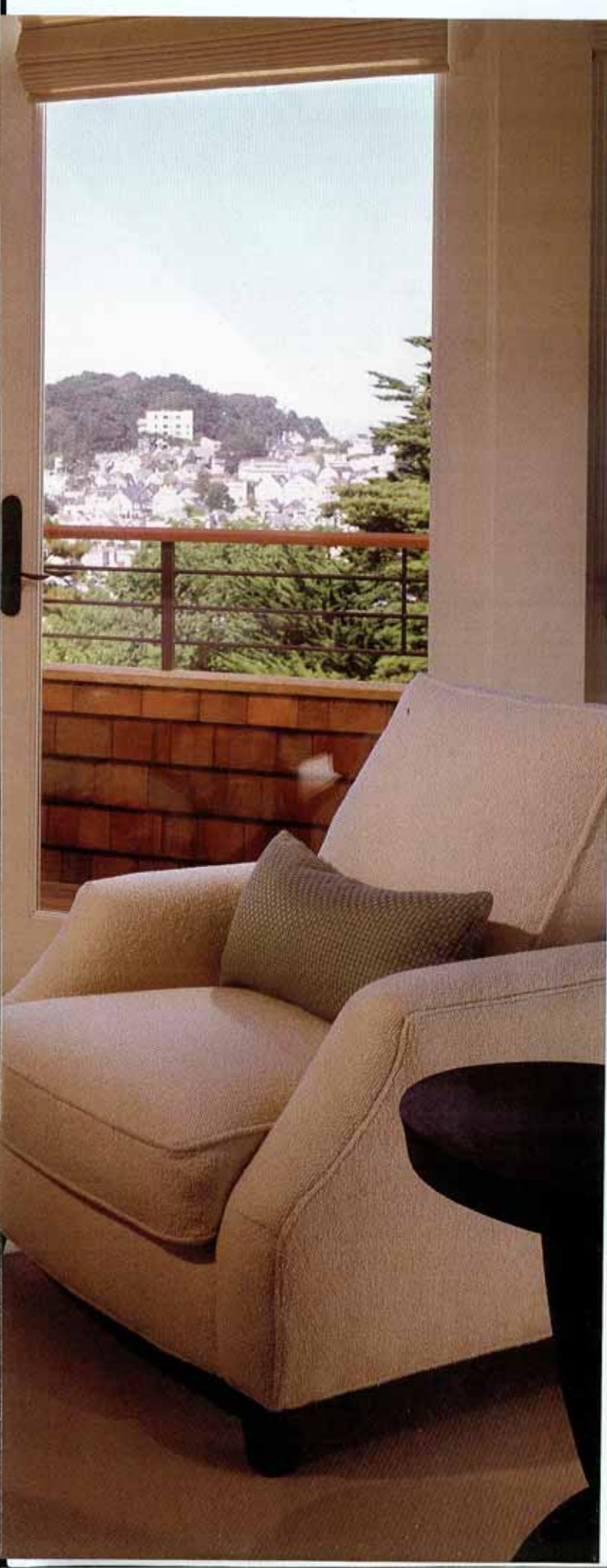


"I think a house should really be a reflection of its inhabitants," says interior designer Steven Miller (right), who upped the comfort level for his clients with elements like the new breakfast nook in the kitchen (below).





A new deck off the master bedroom takes advantage of the city views. A palette of blue green and antique white brings a sense of serenity to the master suite. Miller's subtle touches, including painting the ceiling a darker shade than the walls, add to the intimate atmosphere.



be a refuge from the rest of the house, light filled and clean lined," says Miller. "The materials and finishes are somewhat monochromatic and very luxurious." The master bathroom, all limestone and Calacatta marble, has a tree house view of Sutro Forest across the street. The curving tub surround and egg-shaped crystal hardware from Waterworks contrast with the square shape of the floorplan.

In addition to redefining Craftsman style in a more contemporary way, the design incorporates numerous forward-thinking elements, including a predominance of sustainable natural materials as well as a dozen solar panels on the roof that bring electricity costs down to almost nothing.

The trio of designers collaborated easily from the start of the project, with Morris handling the architecture and space planning,

With its wraparound windows, the fourth floor master bath feels as if it's perched above the treetops—an ideal vantage point for watching the fog roll in.

Kerman-Morris the detailing and Miller the interiors—with plenty of overlap. "I think the sharing of so many ideas made the house even better," says Miller. ■

