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RED
AWARDS
EDITION

ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIOR DESIGN / RICHARD FELIX-ASHMAN,
HANDEL ARCHITECTS

HOME BUILDER / ALEXANDRA KOVACS JONES AND DAN MATAROZZI,
MATAROZZI PELSINGER BUILDERS, INC.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / ERIC AND SILVINA BLASEN,
BLASEN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE





VINTAGE REVIVAL

A HISTORIC BAY AREA REMODEL
BLENDS THE PRESENT WITH THE PAST.

WRITTEN BY LINDA HAYES / PHOTOGRAPHY BY AARON LEITZ



Richard Felix-Ashman's sensibilities as an architect and designer converge as he recalls his first impression of the stately San Francisco residence he's since restored as a West Coast home for his New York City clients. "It was quite stunning. It had a very urban façade inspired by the brick and limestone house fronts on the Place de Vosges in Paris and the feel of a grand Normandy country home in the back, and you could see the magnificent proportions of the architecture," he says. "That resonated strongly as we started to think about what it could be."

Built in 1930 by famed Bay Area architect Albert Farr, the home had seen better days. "It was a hodgepodge inside, and too drafty and cold," shares one of the owners. "We thought we could renovate it over time, until I went to plug my laptop into a wall socket and realized there were no three-prong plugs anywhere in the house. We thought, 'We might as well gut it out!'"



Opposite: A custom walnut bench in Holland & Sherry velvet graces the entryway of a San Francisco home that architect Richard Felix-Ashman restored and designed for his clients. The Art Deco-inspired flooring pattern, installed by Stone Etc. and First, Last & Always, is composed of German oak and Crema Ellia limestone with Belgian Petit Granit cabochons.

Below: A bronze Jean De Merry coffee table anchors the formal living room. Curved Côté France armchairs wearing Holly Hunt silk velvet, a Liaigre sofa and Donghia club chairs inject elegance and comfort into the space. Stilnovo sconces flank the fireplace.



Custom, rift-sawn white-oak French doors with pulls by Rocky Mountain Hardware lead from the foyer to the dining room. The entryway's sculptural Hwange table by Jun-Ho from Sloan Miyasato features a bronze pedestal topped with Belgian limestone.





A wood-floor inset by Schotten & Hansen replaces a traditional rug under a custom table by Troscan Design; the chairs are by Dessin Fournir. Above is a Lindsey Adelman chandelier. At the far end of the table is a bronze sculpture, *Two Women Walking*, by Stephen de Staebler.

The main kitchen features custom cabinets and hardware by Christopher Peacock, and Calacatta macchia vecchia marble counters and a backsplash from Specstones Studio. The range is Lacanche from Art Culinnaire.





As Felix-Ashman orchestrated the home's transformation, he left the reception level's grand proportions mostly intact while he opened up the warrens of rooms that were once delegated to waitstaff on the top and bottom floors. Working with architects Jessica Vass and Jessica Wu, along with designers Alice Crumeyrolle and Ashley Herman, Felix-Ashman mined historical texts on French houses for inspiration to incorporate period-appropriate moldings, plasterwork and materials such as French limestone and reclaimed barnwood. "The 1930 vintage also brings Deco to the story," he says, "and this weaves with the French city narrative, brings a sense of modernity, and gives cues for furnishings and other details."

Light, too, was paramount, so the team expanded the dark entry hall and added terraces off the dining room and living area to establish a better connection with the garden below. Felix-Ashman also created more openness by inserting an expansive arched opening between the dining room and kitchen, and in a modern take on that theme, added oversize arched steel-frame windows to

the enlarged garden level below. "The steel mullions and muntins are extremely slender, lending a lightness to the space and the view," says the architect. The vista reveals a rambling English garden designed by landscape architect Eric Blasen and horticulturalist Silvina Blasen. "It was a jungle back there," says Eric Blasen. "Our goal was to make it more useful and attractive from inside the home as well as outside."

Other decisions, such as the installation of a home automation system, integrated lighting, radiant heating and new copper piping, addressed the home's functionality. General contractor Dan Matarozzi, project manager Alexandra Kovacs Jones and superintendent Robin Beauchamp oversaw the construction work and ensured all the intricate finish details were installed properly. "It speaks volumes of the skill attributable to the many artisans, plumbers, plasterers, cabinetmakers and other tradespeople on the job who helped bring the bones of the house up to date and create interiors that were a throwback to the traditional style," Kovacs Jones says.

Inspired by the bread ovens of old European kitchens, Felix-Ashman designed a fireplace encased in Venetian plaster. Wall art by Emily Payne from the Seager Gray Gallery in Mill Valley hangs above the fire feature and barstools by Soane Britain pull up to the kitchen island.



For the interiors, Felix-Ashman let the architecture drive the design: The reception and master-suite levels exude the formal, urban aesthetic of the home's Parisian façade while the top and bottom floors hew to the rear elevation's more rusticated, Norman style. A neutral palette fills the home, save for strategic pops of color where certain pieces stand out as sculptural elements. The team used neutral groupings where soft hues rendered in linen, velvet and wool shift attention to the room's shapes and forms. "We're always trying to strike a harmony between the architecture and the furnishings," Felix-Ashman says. Velvet- and mohair-covered armchairs, for example, inject warmth into the formal living room. "They're comfortable, and not precious at all," he says. "The velvet captures the light beautifully and plays off the architectural features of some other pieces in the room—hard against soft."

The team worked with Christopher Peacock to create a custom kitchen designed specifically for the owners' needs. "It was one space the clients could really get

involved with," Felix-Ashman says. "They wanted to know what was inside every drawer and behind every door." He then proposed a fireplace behind the kitchen island that was centered in the arched view from the dining room. "Now it feels as if it was always in that location," he says.

Of the home's private spaces, the master suite underwent the most significant changes, including the addition of an annexed sitting room. A custom, double-sided vanity set at a jaunty angle is the centerpiece of the master bathroom, which has a view of the Golden Gate Bridge from the oval soaking tub.

The project credo from start to finish, Felix-Ashman says, was "heritage meets modernity," and he praised his clients for allowing him to follow that path without any deviation. "It's not so modern, not so old," says one of the homeowners. "Richard told us his goal was to have visitors question whether the house was all original or recently updated. It was a clever idea, and we fell in love with it." ■

The oak-paneled cigar room features sconces by Ingo Maurer from Carpenters Workshop in New York and an iron-glazed-lava-stone side table by Christophe Côme from Grájales Gallery in New York. The painting holds the owners' vintage bottle of Hennessy Cognac and a work by Keith Haring.



Hidden openings in the library's restored paneling contain a TV and closet-sized whiskey bar. The custom sofa, armchair and ottomans are George Smith; the brass trays are by Studio Romo and the ceiling light is by Soane Britain.