

INTERIOR DESIGN / TINEKE TRIGGS, ARTISTIC DESIGNS FOR LIVING  
ARCHITECTURE / MARK THOMAS, HOOD THOMAS ARCHITECTS  
HOME BUILDER / JAY BLUMENFELD AND ALLISON HAMMER,  
REDHORSE CONSTRUCTORS, INC.

# MODERN MANOR

A STATELY ABODE IN PACIFIC  
HEIGHTS IS REFRESHED FOR  
AN ACTIVE FAMILY.

WRITTEN BY KIMBERLY OLSON / PHOTOGRAPHY BY AUBRIE PICK

When Wendy Holcombe and Carl Kawaja bought their home—an 1898 Classic Revival-style residence perched on a hill overlooking the San Francisco Bay—they appreciated that it had light on all sides in densely populated Pacific Heights. Yet as their young children became teenagers, and battles ensued over bathrooms and hangout space, the family had to do something about the interior layout. “It was too ornate for who they were,” says designer Tineke Triggs. “They’re much more eclectic, and the family is into karaoke and movies, so how do we create that for them?”

Architect Mark Thomas, who has known the couple for 20 years and worked on other projects for them, set out to strike a balance. “It was a handsome house, so we wanted to respect its existing architectural qualities,” he says, noting the graceful original central staircase, which was painted to highlight its features. “But we also wanted to make it open and bright and family-friendly, instead of a museum.”

Thomas made small additions to the lower level and main floor. “It allowed us to reorganize interior spaces and take advantage of the now-omnipresent views to downtown San Francisco from the back of the house,” he says, adding that the vistas as they are now didn’t exist when the home was constructed. “This house is in Cow Hollow, which was formerly farming and dairy land.” With the vastly changed landscape, Thomas, working with general contractors Jay Blumenfeld and Allison Hammer, found ways to maximize natural light and showcase the bay scenery. “The first, second and third floors have pocketing glass doors at the rear that create a wonderful indoor/outdoor flow,” says Blumenfeld.







**Above:** Designer Tineke Triggs used black-lacquer paint and a Missoni runner to give the original staircase a contemporary look in a Pacific Heights residence for homeowners Wendy Holcombe and Carl Kawaja. Above the owners' chest and antique ship lens, the designer hung a skull she purchased on a cattle ride.

**Opposite:** In the living room, Triggs designed walnut cubes to display shadowboxes by George-Ann Gowan, a friend of Wendy's, and to showcase mementos from Carl's travels. The Flexform sofa wears a Jane Churchill fabric, the chairs are by HBF, and the coffee table was designed by Triggs. Dressing the space are draperies in Schumacher's Shalimar Sheer, fabricated by Susan Lind Chastain, and overhead is a Moooli light fixture.







On the main level, what used to be a dark, divided kitchen with bump-outs for ductwork and a chimney is now a clean rectangle that continues to an expanded terrace with a spiral stair to the yard below. “The new deck has transformed our lives,” Wendy says. “It opens this level to the outdoors.”

Triggs further refreshed the kitchen’s sitting room and breakfast area by washing it in white with bright dashes of color. A sleek white sofa, for example, sports a pillow in a whimsical fabric by Austrian-Swedish designer Josef Frank, a tribute to Carl’s Swedish heritage. “We brought in blues and greens in the back interiors of the house to mirror the natural beauty of the San Francisco Bay and its surrounding landscape,” Triggs says.

Thomas created more generous openings between the kitchen, dining and living areas, which ease movement through the spaces. Decorative millwork honors the home’s traditional roots, but its clean lines speak to the Scandinavian style Carl and Wendy lean toward. In the same vein, Triggs placed the family’s heirlooms and some

of their heavier furnishings next to modern, streamlined pieces. “It was fun to research Swedish patterns and design, and to look at things that were passed down,” she says. “In Europe, people will keep their grandfather’s chest but put an Eames chair right next to it.”

Triggs also found ways to display treasures from Carl’s travels, via display cubes in the living room and special vessels and stands around the house. “He comes home with arrowheads from Vietnam, ax heads, antique medicinal tools and navigation devices,” Wendy says. “She made sure all of it had a place, and it delights my husband to come in and see all of it.” Meanwhile, Triggs had a brainstorm for transforming the nondescript stair landing. “I said, ‘Why don’t we have a real library, a prominent place to display your books?’” she recalls. Custom bookcases now flank a bespoke leaded-glass window designed in a Swedish pattern. “That used to be a blank wall,” Wendy says. “There’s now some purpose behind it.”

The home’s lower level—an underutilized walk-out basement—was redesigned to include a game room and

**Above:** A double oven and cooktop by BlueStar, a company owned by Carl’s family, anchor the airy white kitchen. Artemide suspension lights crown the island, where barstools by Suite NY in a Moore & Giles leather pull up to it.

**Opposite:** Draperies in Sultan’s Suzanni fabric by Martyn Lawrence Bullard inspired the dining room palette. Saarinen Executive Side Chairs from Design Within Reach surround a custom table. The shambala-silk rug is by Himalayan Weavers; the pendants are by Moooi.



A family-heirloom bed anchors the master suite, which is accented by a Gabby bench, bedside lamps by Arteriors, and draperies in a Mark Alexander fabric. Underfoot is a custom Tibetan rug by The Rug Establishment.



“WE BROUGHT IN BLUES AND GREENS TO MIRROR THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AND ITS SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE.”

—TINEKE TRIGGS



**Above:** Glass pocket doors slide back to reveal a terrace off the master bedroom with furnishings by Gloster. Inside, a swivel chair by A. Rudin is upholstered in faux cashmere by Janet Yonaty with leather piping by Samuel & Sons.

**Left:** The master bath features a modern tub from Dzine with Kallista fittings. The floor tile is from J&A Stone & Tile, and the leather pouf is by Selamat from the Henderson Design Group.



theater, gym with wine storage, and a mudroom. Ever mindful that the home had to stand up to three teens and their friends, Triggs used indoor-outdoor fabric in the theater for added durability. The kids also have ample space upstairs—with no more bathroom showdowns. “Each kid got their own unique bedroom and bathroom areas,” says Hammer. Adds Blumenfeld, “Before, there wasn’t a good flow program, but now there’s a main hallway that serves as the spine of those rooms.”

The most dramatic upstairs transformation was in the master suite that expanded to occupy the entire back of the house. The new layout includes a walk-in closet and sliding glass doors that open to a terrace with breathtaking views. “It’s quiet in back, so we sleep with the sliding doors all the way open most nights,” Wendy says. “It’s amazing to sleep like that in a city.”

With the renovations complete, the house finally matches the couple’s style and suits their busy family. “What’s cool about how they live is that, every time I’m there, there’s someone in the kitchen, there’s someone in the living room,” Triggs says. “The house is fluid, and they’re not afraid to use the rooms.” **L**