



After finding a faded architectural gem in Pacific Heights—a four-story house designed in 1962 by William Wurster—Trevor Traina (this page, with Tippy) and designer Patti Skouras spent two years making it fit Traina's vision of modernity. Now, from top to bottom, lines are clean and materials luxurious. In the entry hall, a mahogany floor was refinished; upstairs, in the library off the master suite (opposite), twelve-foot-long rosewood shelves were built. For shopping information, see page 216.

BAY DREAMS

A San Francisco native returns to his childhood neighborhood—in grown-up style.

BY TREVOR TRAINA
PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATTHEW HRANEK





For every period of one's life, there is the perfect house. But as a bachelor in my early thirties looking to return to San Francisco after a stint in Seattle, I was hard-pressed to find mine. My hometown has great neighborhoods but surprisingly little variety in its housing styles; the choice usually boils down to the number of bedrooms, the placement of the kitchen or another such detail. I was looking for something more, something that would surprise. I didn't need the largest house, but I did want a place that was beyond the ordinary.

San Francisco real estate is distinguished by one thing, however: the views, with the area known as Pacific Heights ranking first in desirability because of its sweeping overlooks of the bay and the Golden Gate Bridge. Possibly the three most sought-after "view blocks" in the city are in Pacific Heights, the neighborhood where I grew up, on

a stretch of Broadway known as the Gold Coast. It was here in 2000 that my real-estate agent and I finally found the property that I now call home. At first I thought it must be a bungalow—or was it a garage?—because no house was visible from the street. Once I entered, though, I realized it was indeed a four-story house, of modern design: a front garden led to a long hall with a dining room, living room and kitchen off it; the top floor had a master bedroom, two master baths and a library; and the two lowest floors had guest rooms, offices and a family room that connected to a back garden. Tall and narrow, the place felt like a town house in Manhattan or Boston, albeit one that was hidden by the slope of the hill into which it was built. Best of all, every floor had views—some of the most spectacular I had ever seen.

The residence turned out to have been designed in 1962 by William Wurster, a highly regarded local architect of the mid-twentieth century. (Wurster Hall, housing the UC Berkeley architecture school, is named for him.) Though



Three views of old and new in the living room: Egg-shaped ottomans and Liaigre window-back chairs offer prime spots for taking in a vista of the Golden Gate Bridge (top). A 1950s sideboard by Billy Haines and a 1990s chrome Hudson chair by Philippe Starck are reflected in a mirrored wall (left). **Opposite:** Photographs from the 1930s of San Francisco Bay's bridges flank an Old Master painting by Joseph Heintz II of a Venetian abbey.



famously understated and simple, Wurster's houses are nonetheless full of character and style, noted for the architect's modern interpretations of classic floor plans and his sophisticated use of natural light. To be sure, the property, which had not been substantially redone by its three previous owners, needed work. The kitchen and baths were outdated. The master bedroom was small and faced the street rather than the bay. The dining room had gathered fabric on the



ceiling. Some rooms were even painted Pepto-Bismol pink.

Still, it was obvious the house could be made into a home that would suit my needs. I loved the idea of such an understated exterior on a high-profile block. And the size was perfect: small enough for me to live there alone but large enough to allow for great entertaining and eventually to

By day or night, a new skylighted reception atrium (above and right) is the most dramatic space in the house. Once an open-air courtyard, the black-and-white room was inspired by the exterior's white façade and black ironwork. Patti Skouras custom-designed most of the furniture, including the long marble table (above), topped with vintage chrome lamps and obelisks.





accommodate a family. And I was excited about the idea of exercising my current taste. I had grown up in formal houses done by notable decorators (including Valerian Rybar, Michael Taylor and Thomas Britt) that were full of antiques, bright colors and elaborate fabrics. In Seattle, I lived in an Arts-and-Crafts-style house that was furnished with antique Stickley furniture. I needed a break from clutter.

TREVOR TRAINA'S SAN FRANCISCO

Traina describes CHRISTIAN LIAIGRE FOR HOLLY HUNT AT KNEEDLER FAUCHÈRE, in the San Francisco Galleria (101 Henry Adams Street), as a "temple to modernism. Liaigre is the new Jean-Michel Frank, producing architectural and timeless furniture. For more whimsical pieces, SOMA SOFA (360 Ninth Street) is great." When he wants to customize his finds, Traina turns to J. F. FITZGERALD COMPANY (2750 Nineteenth Street). "It's local and family-owned. They did the white sofas and club chairs in my atrium." He recommends ALABASTER (597 Hayes Street) for decorative objects and lamps, and he goes to 20TH CENTURY INTERIORS (3686 Twentieth Street; by appointment only) for similarly "fun and funky" pieces. On day trips to Los Angeles, Traina visits J. F. CHEN ANTIQUES (8414 Melrose Avenue) for "candlesticks, bowls, wonderful rock-crystal objects and other glamorous goods."



I wanted a modern home with neutral colors and luxurious but minimalist furnishings. I had purchased some furniture by Christian Liaigre for a previous house and was impressed by how masculine, handsome and timeless it was. I also was taken by stories I had heard about a 1930s Art Deco apartment on Russian Hill that Jean-Michel Frank had done for Templeton Crocker, the local banking and railroad magnate. I wanted what Crocker had gotten: the ultimate bachelor pad.

To realize these dreams, I needed help. Key to the process was Patti Skouras, a well-known L.A. and San Francisco decorator. Patti understood my lifestyle, liked the concepts I presented to her and took my ideas further than I could have alone. She and her capable colleague, her daughter-in-law Laura Blumenfeld, became my guides. We turned to Mark

Thomas, a San Francisco-based architect, to carry out the renovation. Mark had impressed me with his pragmatic approach and his knowledge of Wurster houses. Most important, he turned out to be a wonderful ally during the two construction-filled years that it took to achieve my vision.

To maximize the views, we added a new top story with a deck and a hot tub (we are in California, after all). We reconfigured the former top floor by moving the master bedroom to the back, again to capitalize on the vistas, and two rebuilt baths and a new library made the floor into a complete master suite. The living room below was given new paneling, copied from original Wurster designs in the front hall. The dining-room moldings were restored, and the walls were lacquered in a process that required sanding eleven layers (and using forty-five gallons) of paint—inhaling those fumes probably took ten years off our lives! The kitchen was gutted, and a new one was constructed by Bulthaup in Germany and shipped over in sections. It was Patti's idea and is built like a Swiss watch, with drawers and cabinets that close precisely. It is unbelievably well designed and a total waste for a serial microwaver such as I.

When it became clear that, for the most part, my old furniture would not do for the new space, I decided to give free rein to my tastes and pick pieces from different eras. To complement a number of Liaigre chairs, sofas and desks, I bought great early-to-midcentury pieces in New York: a 1920s ▶ 213

In the master suite, contrasts are more subtle than on the high-energy floors below. A wall paneled in satinwood (above) encases a steel spiral staircase leading to a new roof deck—and hides a TV that is best appreciated from the bed (opposite), canopied in Belvoir silk from Hinson & Company. Traina bought the antique Mexican chest in Santa Fe.

