ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIOR DESIGN: RICHARD FELIS ASHMAN, HANDLES ARCHITECTS
HOME DECOR: ALESCANDRA KOVACS JONES AND DAN MATEROZZI, MATEROZZI PELLSINGER BUILDERS, INC.
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE: ERIC AND SILVANA BLASIN, BLASIN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE.

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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 facade 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 Frey, 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 Pettis Ashman renovated and designed for his clients. The Art Deco-inspired flooring pattern, installed by Stone Etc. and First & Last, is comprised of German slate and Crema Bella limestone with Belgian Flamed Gravel cut-inlay. Below: A bronze Jean De Merry coffee table anchors the formal living room. Curved Côté France armchairs wearing Holly Hunt silk velvet, a Ligne sofa and Donghia club chairs inject elegance and comfort into the space. Silver leaf sconces flank the fireplace.
Custom, rift sawn white oak French doors with pivot by Rocky Mountain Hardware lead from the foyer to the dining room. The entryway’s sculptural Hewage table by Jun Ho from Studio Mysaleo features a honed granite top with marble inlay.
The main kitchen features custom cabinets and hardware by Christopher Peacock, and Calacatta-marble marble counters and a backsplash from Specatooms Studio. The range is Lacanche from Art Cuisine.
As Felix-Ashman orchestrated the home's transformation, he let the reception level's grand proportions mostly intact while he opened up the warren of rooms that were once relegated to walkoff on the top and bottom floors. Working with architects Jessica Vess 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 '30s 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 Blaken and horticulturalist Silvina Blaken. "It was a jungle back there," says Eric Blaken. "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 Maturo, 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.
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 Italian 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 started from scratch, 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 salon features sconces by Ingrid Donat from Carpenters Workshop Gallery in New York and an iron-and-glass-fastening sideboard by Christophe Cléremont from the Cristina Gragni gallery in New York. It holds the owners' vintage cameras and a work by Keith Haring.
A custom Lindsey Adams light fixture with 25-globe cascades, " Orion, " through the stained Marigold French bathroom is available for purchase. The stair's original moldings were restored to their original state with new base trim. A Chandelier by Jean de Merry range from gilded-brass chains.
The garden room's bleached-ash beams, reclaimed-pine flooring, Venetian-plaster walls, and 17th-century fireplace were inspired by homes in rural France and Belgium. The armchairs are by Nanna Ditzel from Arne & Co. In a Moore & Giles leather.
“WE’RE ALWAYS TRYING TO STRIKE A HARMONY BETWEEN THE ARCHITECTURE AND THE FURNISHINGS.”

-RICHARD FELIX-ASHMAN
Opposite: The custom canopy bed, fabricated by Cusack Design, offers a "room within a room" in the home's primary guest suite. Felia-Ashkar says, "The Moroccan-style drapes are reupholstered from tassels. The bedside lamps are by Studio Van Den Akker.

Below: A custom double-sided walnut vanity in the master bath features a two-sided mirror by Urban Archeology and custom handblown pendants by Fused Lighting. The walls, flooring and countertops are honed Calacatta marble; the sink fittings are Herbeau.