



THIS PAGE: THE DARK COLOR OF THE COCKTAIL ROOM WAS INSPIRED BY THE BATTERY, A PRIVATE CLUB DESIGNED BY KEN FULK. THE WALLCOVERING IS BY SCHUMACHER; THE MADE GOODS COFFEE TABLE IS OUTFITTED WITH A CUSTOM WOOD TOP AND DOUBLES AS A CARD TABLE. **OPPOSITE:** DESIGNER BRITTANY HAINES SAYS A BLEND OF OPEN AND CLOSED, LIGHT AND DARK CABINETRY MAKES FOR AN INTERESTING ROOM. PENDANTS FROM HOLLOWAYS OF LUDLOW AND WALNUT STOOLS FROM YLIVING ALSO ENLIVEN THE LOOK.

TRIAL by FIRE

WHEN THEY LOST EVERYTHING,
THIS COUPLE REINVENTED THEIR HOME
WITH A FRESH, NEW STYLE

BY MARY JO BOWLING | PHOTOGRAPHY BY SUZANNA SCOTT



AFTER A LONG SEARCH, the owners of this San Francisco flat found their home. The couple, a man named Tim and a woman named Christina, had filled the Edwardian unit with art and family antiques. Then, just six months after unpacking, disaster struck.

"I got a call telling me our home was on fire," says Christina. "I was about 12 blocks from the house when I saw a black plume of smoke. I knew then it was serious."

The flames started in an adjacent building during construction. The couple lost nearly everything to the blaze.

Most remodel projects start after months of planning, but this one came out of the blue. "We had imagined that one day we might update the kitchen," says Christina. "We never anticipated a full-scale remodel on short notice. We were faced with a giant to-do list."

High on that list: finding an architect and interior designer. The answers turned out to be close to home. "Stephen Sutro's office was in our neighborhood, and I just dropped in," says Christina. "Finding him was a lucky break, as his style is a great fit for us."

A chance encounter rounded out the team. While touring the 2015 San Francisco Decorator Showcase, Christina ran into interior designer Brittany Haines, creator of the study that year. Earlier, both women worked together on Junior League programs and Christina quickly drafted Haines for her personal project.

Haines, principal at ABD Studio, was more qualified than Christina knew. "When I was a child, my family home burned down, and we lost absolutely everything. I had experienced the kind of loss and the stresses that go with a fire."



With the team set, the rebuilding—and reinvention—began, and the couple treated the project as a new beginning. From the outset, Sutro recognized an opportunity for improving the flow of the space. "Before, the house was a typical railroad flat with a living room and dining room up front and a long, dark hallway with a jog in the center that led to a kitchen," Sutro says. "As you went back, the floor plan narrowed. We added a 250-square-foot side addition there, and this gave us space for an open-plan kitchen, living room and dining room at the rear of the house."

Sutro also widened the hallway and added windows along it, making it brighter and allowing the new living space to be seen from the front door. Just off the entry, there's now an entertaining space called the "cocktail room," where the couple lifts glasses and plays cards with friends.

With the new spaces set, the questions of style began. Christina favors classic design; Tim is a modernist. "We landed on a look that's modern with a slightly traditional feel," says Haines. "The spaces are clean-lined, but there's a softness to them. We call it 'soft modern.'"

In translation, that means that the minimal aesthetic is mediated by sleek molding, cozy textiles and traditional materials. "At first, I struggled with the concept," says Christina. "But the details in the baseboard and the trim around the windows and doors won me over."

The large dining room and kitchen were also persuasive. "It was important to me to have a more formal dining room. I couldn't imagine having Thanksgiving dinner at a farm table in the kitchen," says Christina.

Of course, the engine that powers those dinner parties is the kitchen, and this one is a study in compromise. "Christina is drawn to crisp, white kitchens and Tim prefers other colors," says Haines. "We have gray-stained walnut cabinets on the bottom and white cabinets on top."

Christina loves marble countertops, but they wanted something more practical. The solution was the marble-tile backsplash and honed granite for the work surfaces. The grace notes are in the upper cabinets, where open shelves let Christina display family pieces.

"Every morning I wake up and go into the kitchen and I find it refreshing and inspiring," says Christina. "It's a great place for some quiet time before the day gets busy."

OPPOSITE PAGE, LEFT: ARCHITECT STEPHEN SUTRO SAYS MOVING THE LIVING ROOM TO THE BACK OF THE HOUSE MADE FOR A BEAUTIFUL CONNECTION WITH THE GARDEN. JOEY, A NORWICH TERRIER, SITS ON A SOFA BY AMERICAN LEATHER; COFFEE TABLES ARE BY BOCONCEPT.

OPPOSITE PAGE, RIGHT: HAINES MADE CUSTOM COLOR SELECTIONS FOR THIS WALLCOVERING BY AREA ENVIRONMENTS. **THIS PAGE:** A LIGHT FIXTURE BY APPARATUS HANGS OVER A WALNUT DINING TABLE SURROUNDED BY VELVET UPHOLSTERED EXECUTIVE ARMCHAIRS BY EERO SAARINEN. THE DINING TABLE AND CONSOLE ARE CUSTOM BY SEVENTH & 7TH DESIGNS.

