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San Francisco Cottages and Gardens

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*Sexy
Fall
Style*

NOB HILL
BELVEDERE
ST. HELENA
SUNSET

A Pointed Interior
In the family room,
a cast-metal deer
and an Anne Seims
print gaze down from
the concrete wall
onto a leather-tooled
coffee table.
See Resources.



LIGHTEN UP

Designer Erin Martin
brings the loft life
to a classic Victorian

BY MINDY PANTIEL | PHOTOGRAPHS BY TUBAY YABUT





AT ERIN MARTIN'S INSISTENCE, the word "Marco" has been engraved in the concrete wall of the swimming pool at her client's St. Helena home. Needless to say, anyone taking a dip is immediately possessed with the irresistible urge to shout "Polo." "I want people to participate in design and not take everything so seriously," says Martin. "This isn't brain surgery, and people shouldn't lose their minds over interior design."

This refreshingly unpretentious approach appealed to her current clients, a pair of Virginia transplants who purchased a wine country Victorian and commissioned the designer to give it an urbane yet laid-back look. Martin recalls of her initial meeting with them, "The wife was so chic my first thought was Anna Wintour has nothing on this woman!"

At first glance, the quaint Victorian with its carved brackets and wraparound porch in need of invigorating seemed an unlikely domicile for an East Coast fashionista. So Martin topped the eaves and front door with a coat of black paint to infuse the historic architecture with a hint of modern style. "Black and white are strong in fashion right now," she notes. Inside, thanks to the good taste and renovation efforts of the previous owners other than the addition of white Moroccan tiles in the kitchen the home was ready to be dressed.

"The clients wanted a respite where they could entertain," says Martin, noting he's the practical one and she's all about art and style. "So we went for a loft look with Napa on the side," she adds about the chic-meets-casual aesthetic that emerged.

Martin holds firm to her belief that whenever possible a room should have elements of wood, metal, glass and stone, and that the best fabrics are calm and simple. "I don't like pattern, and I use the same natural linen for everything!" she adds. Texture is another matter. "I love texture," she says, noting the padded master bedroom headboard, fashioned from a moving blanket, the buffalo hide



Rurbanity The Windsor chairs in the dining room (TOP LEFT) are a mix of the client's own and a pair from Eclectiques. City and country merge in the living room (LEFT). The Jens Risom Big chair is through Ralph Pucci. The nine ebonized-mahogany and brass-inlaid mirrors are through Blackman Cruz. See Resources.



Laser Guided
Intricate laser-cut
acrylic panels
(THIS PAGE) line
the stairwell.
See Resources.





Framing The Home

A series of eight birds nests lines the wall in the upstairs hallway (LEFT). Custom floating rosewood side tables by Jeff Menchaca (ABOVE) flank the bed in the master bedroom. Brass jug pendants are through Orange. Martin employed a custom clay hand as a towel rack in the powder room (OPPOSITE PAGE, FAR RIGHT). See *Resources*.



“The clients wanted a respite where they could entertain. So we went for a loft look with Napa on the side”

rug in the guest room, and the acrylic staircase rails and screens that required hours of discussion with a computer tech to refine the laser cuts.

Into these rich material surroundings, Martin mixed family heirlooms with vintage and contemporary pieces. She selected a pair of Ralph Pucci lounge chairs for their overscaled dimensions, included the owners' Windsor chairs in the dining room, and snapped up nine antique ebonized-wood mirrors with brass plaques for the living room. A cluster of antlers on the living room coffee table (“an homage to Alexander McQueen's skulls,” she says) introduces a fauna motif that continues with a cast-steel deer head morphing out of the family room's concrete wall, a pair of haunting portraits by Anne Siems depicting children dressed in animal skins and antlers, and

a photo montage of birds' nests in the upper-level hallway. In the master bedroom, a horse bit hanging from the headboard is another cheeky Martin gesture. “The S&M joke was totally intentional,” Martin adds.

The designer says her favorite moment on any project is installation day. “It's so exciting because things may not end up where you planned, and getting all the puzzle parts to fit is so much fun,” she says. “In the end, all that matters is that it is comfy and that you make your client beyond happy.” And, just to ensure the good times kept rolling after her departure, the designer encrypted the St. Helena powder-room wall with phrases only the homeowners would understand. “It's all of their inside jokes,” she adds. “It's like Marco on the pool wall; it's where their humor lies.”

