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A family with young children needed just a nudge from designer Jay Jeffers to get their new home up and running in style.

BY LEILANI MARIE LABONG PHOTOGRAPHY BY CÉSAR RUBIO



Designer Jay Jeffers' masterful eye for color has become his signature. This San Francisco family home announces its pure prettiness at the entry with a pair of Gregorius Pheas chairs upholstered in blue linen with orange accents that are picked up by the drapery panels and shelves.



TOP TO BOTTOM: In the entry, an elegant Dushak rug gives way to a more modern staircase runner; Kelly Mohla and Jay Jeffers completed the speedy transformation; Willem Rackel's hand-painted walls in the powder room were the client's idea.



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omewhere between candidly admitting that they were first-time decorators and coming up with the inspiration to pair large-scale abstract canvases with classic Louis XV-style furniture, the new owners of an architecturally ambiguous 1912 home in San Francisco made a surprising discovery: Under the guidance of designer Jay Jeffers, they were actually bolder risk-takers than they ever imagined.

It was a valuable revelation, considering their ambitious goal—completely redesigning the interiors of their Pacific Heights home in just seven short months. The March 2010 move-in date was non-negotiable because the wife—a former corporate recruiter turned stay-at-home mother—was at the time expecting the couple's second child and quite eager to settle the young family into its first real home.

"They learned to trust us pretty quickly," says Jeffers, principal of Jeffers Design Group in San Francisco. "They didn't have time to agonize over 12 different ottoman options or stew over wall treatments—which is not to say they didn't have their reservations about some choices."



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Dividing the vast living room into two seating areas allowed for a blend of new and vintage furniture: a pair of 1950s armchairs were covered in sea-green velvet; a large Sheri Franssen painting anchors the room.



At the far end of the family room—across from the kitchen—built-in storage creates a cozy dining nook or a stylish place to play cards under the light of a Venetian mirrored chandelier.



“From the beginning, the clients kept saying that they weren’t ‘fancy,’ just normal people who wanted a beautiful—and functional—house.”

The detail in question: a neutral lattice pattern wall treatment in the living room, hand screened by SF decorative painter Willem Backé. The motif—an artistic diversion from regular flat wall paint—doesn’t detract from the spirited paintings that share the space or compete with the cool green-gray tones in the upholstery, but merely adds a subtle texture to the elegant scene.

“They were unsure about it, but once they saw the finished product, they loved it,” says Jeffers. Other successful leaps of faith included the kitchen’s floral-mosaic backsplash (at first glance, the Waterworks tile seemed more appropriate for a bathroom) and a pearly salmon-hued trim in the baby girl’s nursery.

“It’s such an unusual color that even the painters questioned it. That’s when I started to freak out,” says the wife. Lime-green linen draperies boost the room’s spunk factor, while a graceful scroll-patterned wallpaper by Cole & Son bestows a demure, ladylike quality. “It’s now one of my favorite spots in the house,” she says.

Needless to say, adapting to Jeffers’ fearless color sensibility required some personal growth from the couple.

“It wasn’t easy, but we wanted to be pushed beyond our comfort zone,” says the wife. Once acclimated, she conceptualized a bold, hand-screened, Hermès-orange chinoiserie design on the walls of the powder room, while Jeffers, who envisioned the small space as a “jewel box,” installed a sparkly crushed-glass tile floor.

The home’s fresh coral, blue and green palette saturates the upholstery and art. “We’re new to buying art,” says the wife. “We’re also realizing that when it comes to art, we’re less traditional than we thought.” A colossal abstract canvas by Sheri Franssen punctuates the serene living room with a turbulent burst, while another interpretive piece by John DiPaolo enlivens the family room’s prevailing wood finishes. Both paintings serve as contemporary counterpoints to the design’s more traditional elements.

Using the home’s majestic French-style wrought-iron banister as inspiration, Jeffers



FROM TOP: The kitchen, with its floral-mosaic tile backsplash and upholstered bar stools, exemplifies the pretty-meets-casual edict (even the comfy family room sofa fits the bill).





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: The master bedroom continues the color scheme from the main living areas; traditional fixtures and white marble elevate the look of the bathroom; misty blue and taupe reference the valuable views.





and senior designer Kelly Hohla helped the couple choose, among other distinguished pieces, the baroque gilt-wood mirrors for the foyer, the Chinese Han Dynasty vases on the entryway table and a pair of French carved-alabaster urn lamps in the master bedroom. "We definitely jump-started their new antiques collection," says Hohla. "But they want to really start collecting when their children get a little older."

While historic vestiges add an air—or, in this case, a gentle breeze—of distinction to the design, the homeowners' need for what they call a "kid-proof, stress-free environment," took

ABOVE AND RIGHT: In a slight departure from the standard kids' colors, Jeffers brought a range of blue-greens to the boy's room (where a map is a vibrant focal point) and contrasting salmon and lime green to the girl's nursery.





ABOVE: The walls in the basement-level media room were given a stré finish for a subtle added texture. BELOW: The artwork over the A. Rudin sectional sofa is a mixed-media piece by Judy Pfaff.



“It gets loud and messy in this house. But we don’t have any ‘off-limits’ rooms here—they would just be a waste of space.”

precedence over acquiring too many costly objets d’art. “My husband began yearning for anything from Ikea,” says the wife, citing the couple’s two-year-old son and his daily rituals of sliding on the walnut floors and clambering over the furniture to glimpse passing trucks through the windows.

“From the beginning, the clients kept saying that they weren’t ‘fancy,’ just normal people who wanted a beautiful—and functional—house,” explains Hobla. The toddler’s daring feats are made less nerve-wracking with high consoles that place prized possessions out of his reach (other valuables are displayed on the upper shelves of built-in bookcases). And durable outdoor fabrics were used cleverly, especially in the boy’s bedroom, where a colorful world map on the wall was the inspiration for the youthful blue, green and white geometric-patterned fabric used for bedding and throw pillows—a far cry from the staid designs of outdoor fabrics past.

“It gets loud and messy in this house,” says the wife. “But we don’t have any ‘off-limits’ rooms here—they would just be a waste of space.”

In a home where the concept of a forbidden room is, well, forbidden, there are still a few areas in the house that are more celebrated than others. From a design perspective, Jeffers has a soft spot for the living room, citing its whimsical and easy take on classical pieces (“It really



sets the tone for the rest of the house," he says), while Hohlh has a fondness for the airy master bedroom's calming blue-and-taupe color palette and subtle pattern combinations. But the family, not surprisingly, prefers to dwell in the combined open kitchen and family room. There, the deep sofas—transplants from their previous residence—are cozy and familiar, the sizable marble breakfast bar works superbly as a desk (the formal office seems far away on the third floor) and the large windows, which provide a generous infusion of light and views of the Golden Gate Bridge and Marin Headlands, are perfect for watching the trucks go by. ■

RIGHT: The husband's office on the top floor is a quiet spot where he can work early mornings and late nights without disturbing his family. **ABOVE:** The office leads to the roof deck, where the views make for a spectacular breakfast setting.

