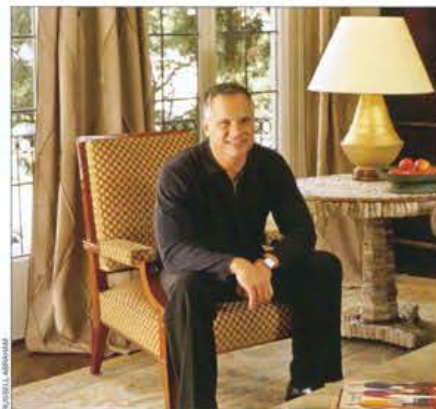




AFTER

First, there was Julia. In 1915, less than a decade after the great earthquake and fire that left most of San Francisco in ashens ruins, Julia Morgan, the architect of Hearst Castle, set about reimagining a surviving gingerbread Victorian on Russian Hill. The house was situated in the steep, foggy upper reaches of the city, a neighborhood that was home to nabobs of high society as well as artists like Dorothea Lange and the poet and painter Maynard Dixon. Morgan waved the wand of her formidable talents and completely transformed the house, adding a front wing with a generous living room and a stately Neoclassical façade with grand, arched windows.

Thrice blessed, the residence was remodeled once again in the early 1980s, when Anthony Hail, the noted San Francisco decorator, bought the place and put his own stamp on it, widening hallways, expanding rooms and opening views to take advantage of the neighborhood's ac-



"The entirely new interior design pays respect to the history of the house, but it also expresses the adventurous taste of a young family," says Marzo (left), who renovated the interiors and brought together furniture and accessories from 26 centuries and six continents.

ROMANCE on Russian Hill

A STORIED SAN FRANCISCO RESIDENCE LOOKS TO THE 21ST CENTURY

Interior Design by James Marzo/Text by Patricia Leigh Brown
After Photography by Tim Street-Porter



BEFORE

A San Francisco house with a rich past—architect Julia Morgan and interior designer Anthony Hail each remodeled it—has undergone another reinvention at the hands of James Marzo. ABOVE AND LEFT: The living room. Old World Weavers check on armchairs. Edelman sofa leather.

cess to the sky (see *Architectural Digest*, December 1982).

Now it's James Marzo's turn. "It's rare to find a space with such great bones," says Marzo, a San Francisco-based designer and antiques expert who oversaw the restoration of the private antiques collection of Gordon and Ann Getty. "Julia Morgan blessed us with great architecture, and Tony Hail enhanced it. It didn't need a lot of refinement. We just tweaked it."

"Tweaking" is a modest description of his design for the residence, now owned by a young couple with two children who, in their own transformation, had a bicoastal romance before marrying and purchasing the house. Both were successful businesspeople, and the husband had worked with Marzo on two

previous residences. "You see contrasting surfaces and periods in Jim's work," he says. "We wanted the house to be reasonably spare yet filled with unusual pieces. Artistic people tend to be a little flaky. Jim is not."

The wife, who had moved from Manhattan, fell in love with the scale of the house, as well as the quality of light filtering through Julia Morgan's leaded windows and the irresistible presence of a large redwood tree. In a previous life as a harried professional, she had adhered to the Carrie Bradshaw school of decorating. "I had never done any decorating beyond painting my one-bedroom apartment in New York," she admits. "I wanted a very handsome house—a mix—but also a comfortable one for our family."

OPPOSITE LEFT AND THIS PAGE: Marzo transformed a pale room into a dramatic indigo study. The 1962 work on paper is by Le Corbusier. The pair of 1940s armchairs, covered in Brunswick & Fils fabric, are by Jean Royère. Clarence House stripe on stools.



BEFORE

The structure first needed an unsexy overhaul—a new foundation and what is euphemistically known in quake country as a seismic upgrade. That accomplished, the designer and clients began to refine the interior spaces—the “great bones” of Julia Morgan. Beyond the 12-foot ceilings, leaded windows and original chimneypieces, there was a blank slate. Neither designer nor clients wanted a period house. “I wanted to respect the history of the residence,” Mar-



BEFORE

ABOVE: An enfilade of rooms created by Hail had been painted uniformly. RIGHT: The designer, who gave each space a unique identity, enveloped the dining room in Chinese scenic wallpaper. Chairs, once owned by Karl Lagerfeld, and table from Christie's. Stark carpet.



AFTER

AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER



LEFT AND OPPOSITE INSET: For a “bold yet tranquil” master bedroom, Marzo blended low-key, neutral tones. A four-poster he designed “forms a room within the bedroom.” The mixed-media work is by Jeff Long; the photograph is by Robert Hartman. Volute-krater, Christie’s.

zo explains, “but also to respect a young dynamic family.”

It is safe to say that *eclectic* is the most overused word in decorating. Yet, in this case, the designer’s guiding philosophy was indeed authentically eclectic. The unexpected pairing of objects from different periods and places—a Louis XVI commode, say, with a couple of antique Sudanese Dinka tobacco pipes—enlivens both the pieces and the rooms they inhabit.

In a sense, Marzo functioned as a landscape designer, creating vistas throughout the residence. “The house has pretty views of itself,” notes the wife. He began with the floors, installing 18th-century Italian walnut boards in a herringbone pattern. Next he turned to the finishes. In the living room, Julia Morgan’s *pièce de résistance*, for instance, three sets of French doors overlook a handsome ironwork balcony. Taking his cues from the architecture, Marzo added straw-colored rusticated plaster walls and marbled baseboards, whose pattern was drawn from the original chimneypiece. Though there are important antiques throughout, among them a commanding 18th-century rock-crystal chandelier, there is also an edge, symbolized by a giant sculptural nut and bolt on the floor and an 18th-century *trompe l’oeil* bookcase.

A major mission was to help the couple assemble a significant collection of antique furniture, objects and art. A self-described “auction hound,” the designer steered his clients to auction houses in the Unit-



BEFORE



AFTER

TOP: The anteroom off the entrance hall was completely gutted. ABOVE: Marzo installed trellage throughout “as an homage to Elsie de Wolfe,” then furnished the space with an 18th-century Swedish commode and a Directoire side chair. The bronze vessel is Han Dynasty.

ON RUSSIAN HILL

ed States and abroad. Marzo, who has a degree in psychology and economics from Stanford University—useful in his line of work—was interior design director for Therien & Co., the A-list antiques dealer. The pieces painstakingly acquired range from ancient Greek to Art Déco and span 26 centuries and six continents. “I love the contrast between pieces that have sat outside for hundreds of years and the highly finished interiors,” says the husband. When perfect objects could not be found, Marzo designed them.

Among the inherited wealth was Tony Hail’s enfilade. “I like rooms that unravel,” the designer remarks, “rooms that each time you visit unfold into something new.” Marzo’s twist on the enfilade is a series of jewel-like rooms as exquisitely detailed as Fabergé eggs. The first is a small, romantic dining room, made large and welcoming by Chinese scenic wallpaper commissioned and painted especially for the room. It is presided over by an 18th-century Italian gilt candlelit chandelier, lowered by pulley, and Directoire chairs that once belonged to Karl Lagerfeld.

From that room the study unfolds, its walls lacquered an exotic indigo blue. A bronze fixture with alabaster oil lamps creates a painterly *mis-en-scène*. A pair of 1940s Jean Royère chairs commune with a 19th-century Indonesian ceremonial scarf, an example of the couple’s passion for what she calls “antiques with a very modern edge.”

The visual denouement is the master bedroom—specifically, an imposing figured Greek volute-krater, circa 330 B.C. The palette, a spare, muted olive and dove gray, was kept restrained to “let the forms express themselves,” says Marzo—among them a bulbous 1950s Italian ceramic lamp and another made from a 19th-century French chimney vent.

The wife’s favorite room is the entrance hall, with its antiqued-stone floors and faux-stone plaster walls, which she enters “100 times a day,” often with the family’s breathless golden retriever in tow. Two ancient stone lions, her husband’s pet objets, stand guard.

In fact, there is hardly a place or period unrepresented in this stylishly reincarnated residence. “What we don’t have is Antarctica,” observes James Marzo, tongue only partially in cheek. “Yet.” □