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HOME+DESIGN

DRAMATIC
TRANSFORMATIONS

LOOK AGAIN

4 NEW
LIGHTING
IDEAS

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SAN FRANCISCO
RENOVATION

SARATOGA
REMODEL

GLEN ELLEN
MAKEOVER

PALM SPRINGS
RESTORATION



Before the renovation, the focal point of the family room was a bulky stone fireplace that distracted from the lush views outside. Working with subdued hues and industrial materials, Kessler designed a fireplace surround of bronzed metal and Venetian plaster with a limestone hearth that's flush with the floor.

It all started with an old sofa, hard in all the wrong places and decidedly uninviting for watching television or curling up with a book. "My daughter kept complaining about how uncomfortable the sofa was, and suddenly we found ourselves in the middle of remodeling the entire space," laughs Marsha Witkin as she surveys the makeover of the upper level of the sprawling home she shares with her husband, Jon, and two college-age daughters in the Saratoga hills. "Once we decided to replace the sofa, the project really took on a life of its own."

The upper level of the house, which consists of an open family room and home-office area and an adjoining master-bedroom-and-bathroom suite, is dominated by huge windows that reveal views of the pool terrace, the hills and Silicon Valley in the distance. Witkin had always wanted to bring the feeling of the house's outdoor surroundings indoors.



Impressed by the use of unusual materials in a powder room that she saw in the San Francisco Decorator Showcase house in the spring of 2003, she called in the room's designer, Tracey Kessler of TKID, whose industrial-organic aesthetic proved to be the perfect collaborative match.

"In my work, I'm drawn to the colors and textures of nature, but also to industrial materials like metal and concrete and to beautifully designed yet functional objects, so it was easy to get on the same design wavelength as Marsha," says Kessler. "And I was very pleased that she was so open to letting go of pieces she already had that wouldn't work in the new design."

Without much sentimentality, Witkin said good-bye to the uncomfortable sofa, the original gray carpeting, the color scheme of burgundy and navy blue and the massive lava-rock fireplace with its bench seats that hogged floor space.

"We started by pulling up the carpeting on the stairway that leads to the upper level, and literally worked our way on up



LEFT: In the office, Kessler constructed cabinet doors using an industrial material, Lumicon—two sheets of translucent resin with strips of wood veneer pressed between them. **BELOW:** The stairwell, with its custom window panel, now features an eight-foot-high light fixture, a spiral of thick metal wire that Kessler had made into a lamp. Kessler also designed the bronzed metal vases. “I looked at this empty wall as a canvas and mounted the vases on it like modern art,” she says.



throughout the second floor,” says Kessler. In the stairway landing, a light-filtering silk-and-leather wall tapestry designed by Kessler hides a low, oddly placed window. A peekaboo panel allows for a glimpse of the outdoors. At the top of the stairs, a partial wall was built to conceal the home office, and the hodgepodge of metal filing cabinets and desks was replaced with a custom-designed system to bring style to the space and keep paperwork and clutter at bay.

The new palette is composed of the natural hues and refined, tactile materials favored by both Kessler and Witkin. The office is open to the family room, with its warm taupe-and-camel color scheme and sophisticated yet relaxed mix of materials. Throughout the second floor, the oak floor was stripped and then stained with layer upon layer of a deep ebony finish. The new fireplace—part functional element, part modern sculpture—is wrapped in metal and Venetian plaster, with a slab of limestone for the hearth. Luxurious, neutral fabrics cover clean-lined seating; a tweedy



ABOVE: Before Kessler came in, the master bedroom was nondescript, and the bed was positioned under the sloping ceiling. Kessler brought a warm color to the walls and added ebonyized shutters before arranging the bed to face the newly staged fireplace. Furnished with graphic, modern pieces, including a pair of concrete drum tables by Clodagh, the space now glows. RIGHT: Marsha and Jon Witkin with their daughter Marisa, whose complaint about the uncomfortable sofa was the impetus for the redesign.



wool, silk and linen blend on the sofa and a nubby chenille on the sectional. A Vicente Wolf wool-and-silk knotted rug lies underfoot. Hourglass-shaped cast-concrete end tables, custom-designed by Kessler and Buddy Rhodes, flank the sofa and add sculptural interest. A piece of glass from Jon Witkin's glass-manufacturing company was used to transform a hand-painted Louise Mann wood bench into a coffee table.

Much of the inspiration for the palette came from Marsha Witkin's penchant for art and accessories with an ethnic feel. Mango-wood urns, a 1940s drum from what was then Burma, an African pipe and an oxcart wheel from Indonesia are just a few of the unusual pieces she rotates around the room. After updating the original floor-to-ceiling built-in bookcase with a dark finish, Kessler rearranged the upper shelves to hold more items from Witkin's growing collection. Paintings, most by California artists that Witkin has discovered at auctions and at San Francisco galleries, are lit by a clever overhead lighting system that Kessler created. A bendable metal track fashioned into a room-encompassing organic shape holds glass pendant lights that softly illuminate the space, while monopoints are positioned to highlight the art hanging on the walls.

The harmonious tones continue in the master-bedroom suite, which is separated from the family room by a hallway. Witkin asked for a "Zen-like nest" to relax in at the end of the day, and Kessler answered with earthy burnt-pumpkin walls, ebonyized shutters and soft wool carpeting. The Witkins wanted to keep the existing wood-burning stove, so Kessler moved it to center stage facing the bed and, inspired by a fireplace she had seen in a hotel in Africa, designed a Venetian plaster cocoon on a concrete base for it. Amber-hued Gulassa pendant lamps crafted from resin—one of Kessler's favorite industrial materials—add symmetry as well as subtle lighting to keep the mood tranquil.

"I think all of the organic elements work so well with the natural colors that flow throughout the house," says Kessler. "It feels so calm and serene, which is exactly what Marsha and Jon wanted." ■