

Bright Ideas

BY JORDAN KUSHINS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY AUBRIE PICK

SAN FRANCISCO-BASED FIRM GREEN COUCH INTERIORS COMPLETELY TRANSFORMED THIS NORTHERN CALIFORNIA HOME WITH A BRAND NEW COLOR-SCHEME AND AN EMPHASIS ON BIG, BOLD ART.



THIS PAGE: A PAIR OF PIECES BY ARTIST CAROLYN MEYER SET A LOVELY, LIVELY TONE IN THE LIVING ROOM ABOVE A NAULA WORKSHOP SOFA SET IN ROMO'S CRUSHED VELVET LORIANO FABRIC IN METALLIC TWILIGHT **OPPOSITE PAGE:** THE COUPLE IN A COMMISSIONED WORK BY JHINA ALVARADO MAINTAIN PRIDE, OF PLACE IN THE DINING ROOM, WITH TABLE BY SEVENTH & SEVENTH AND CHAIRS BY CLIFF YOUNG.



“**B**EIGE ON BROWN ON BEIGE ON BROWN.” This was Jeff Schlarb’s first impression of Rebecca and Don Kingsborough’s house in Blackhawk, an unincorporated community east of Oakland built up around a pair of immaculately kept golf courses. But Schlarb—the principal designer at Green Couch, a San Francisco-based firm focused on residential interiors and staging—saw potential in the somewhat uninspired monochrome. “It was such a nice address, and the clients had lovely, energetic, fun personalities,” says Schlarb. “But after 10 years, they really needed a change.” What was originally planned as an upgrade for their living room and master bedroom turned into a year-long labor of love that took over the entire property.

The creative collaboration began at the company’s Potrero Avenue studio, a “luxurious amount of space” that facilitates the team’s hands-on approach to their work. “Instead of doing storyboards, we do a story room,” Schlarb says. “The whole house is laid out on three islands,” with these different, loosely assembled vignettes offering choices for fabric, furniture, products, images, and more. “It’s very interactive,” he says. “I think of it like deejaying; they’re reacting to things in real time and then so are we. Together we can move things around—see how the shapes and colors affect each other—and because the process is so fluid, we’ll knock out and decide on 90 to 95 percent of what we want to use right there.”

Modernizing meant sharpening up the “80s curves” that came with the architecture and brightening up the

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aforementioned muddy palate with a base of beautiful white. Rebecca favored soft blue hues, which imbued everything with a kind of coolness and “feminine” serenity; Schlarb balanced it out with substantial wood furnishings like shelving units to warm things up again.

The art was, for the most part, chosen by the client, but not without a bit of guidance. “They’d be at a gallery like Dolby Chadwick in San Francisco and I’d be walking around with my family in Napa, and I’d get a call or a text saying: ‘What about this?’ I think that was a first,” Schlarb says. In addition, some of the couple’s existing pieces were reframed to make them contemporary and “cool again,” and he oversaw all hanging on-site to ensure everything was completely level and at precisely the right height for maximum impact.

As important as the aesthetic adjustments, however, was a keen eye for functionality. The dining room, for example, had to have seating for 14 in order to accommodate the couple’s seven kids and growing gang of grandchildren.

This attention to detail on both a micro and macro level is standard practice for Schlarb, who has a unique understanding of the alchemy it takes to make a dwelling beautiful but also truly livable. “I want people to walk through their home and feel like: ‘Oh my gosh, this is amazing,’” he says. “It’s all about how the space makes them feel.”



TOP: THE DESIGNER CHOSE A DARK WOOD TO ACCENT THE WHITE AND PASTEL FOUNDATION IN THE KITCHEN **MIDDLE:** ANOTHER VIEW OF THE DINING ROOM USED FOR FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT **BOTTOM:** THE MASTER BEDROOM FEATURES A MODERN CHAISE, AGAINST A GALLERY WALL OF ART

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THIS PAGE, TOP: THE POOL CABANA BY ARCHITECT SANDRA BONDERUD WAS ALSO A NEW EXTERIOR ADDITION CONCURRENT WITH THE INTERIOR REDESIGN. **LEFT:** A CHAIR AND OTTOMAN BY VLADIMIR KAGAN COMPLETE THE NATURAL LIGHT-FILLED TABLEAU IN THE MASTER BEDROOM **RIGHT:** SHERIE FRANSSSEN’S *AN UNFINISHED WOMAN* ADDS COLOR AND DEPTH TO THE FAMILY ROOM.