

THAT LAYERED LOOK

*Texture, color and
personal space are all
on the radar of the Bay Area's
top interior designers.*

BY JENNIFER MASSONI PARDINI

As an editor, much of my job is knowing what to use as much as — if not more than — what not to. With each story, I layer in critical information while capturing a mood and a point of view. In talking shop with interior designers **Leo Cesareo, Kendra Nash, Jeff Chlarb** and **Tineke Triggs** for the roundtable discussion that follows, I realized how similar our creative processes really are. So perhaps it's no wonder that the world of design has been my preferred escape this last year and a half while I penned the Design Spotlight department for this magazine and tripled my subscriptions to home design magazines, ideally spread open around me over a weekend afternoon. As I often waded through their pages, I'd close my eyes and reimagine the room around me in a thousand different ways.

On a late August afternoon, I entered a similar design dream state, but this time in the virtual company of these local interior designers whose individual aesthetics I've admired over the years. Our intention was to discuss the current design landscape and its horizon, as well as the projects clients are requesting now that Zoom backgrounds are dialed in and distance learning stations are — fingers crossed — on permanent pause. Let's dive into a conversation with the folks who feel lucky to not only reimagine what it means to feel at home, but also bring it to vivid, layered life.

One note begone.
From a blue-hued
ceiling, drapery, rug
and textiles, layers
add depth and visual
interest to this living
room by Jeff Chlarb
Design Studio.



We all know how “home” has had to serve multiple functions, from office to school to gym and back again. What are clients asking for now?

Kendra Nash: Obviously the office. We’re doing a ton of those. I’ve had a lot of requests for podcast rooms. Our tech clients are getting into that as a hobby when they couldn’t travel for a while. On another note, what I’m really finding with the architectural process is that before it was just all wide-open spaces. People want to bring it back in a little bit, construction-wise and also, I would say, take out the formalities.

Leo Cesareo: Currently, I’m working on a project in Corte Madera. They want to turn a master closet into a soundproof kind of Zoom space. They’re calling it a “cloffice” — a closet-office.

Tineke Triggs: It’s all about the flexibility of lifestyle, but it’s also creating man caves and woman caves, spaces that are different than just office spaces. So I’m finding that’s a big trend right now.

So a sense of privacy or solitude is what we want now?

TT: Yeah, we already know home gyms and home offices are going to stay for a while, but it’s then that other getaway space. How do we split the homes into quadrants for people to have their own identity or get away because they can’t physically get away?

Jeff Chlarb: The most exciting thing I’ve seen is we are now able to be more artistic. The living room doesn’t have to be in the same palette exactly as a family room. And this doesn’t have to be just one note. It was always harder [when] maybe people who have just come into means don’t want to look too ostentatious in front of their friends. And then they equate layering to some sort of flaunting of their wealth. It’s just not true. It’s just: What do you want the home to deliver to you? Do you want to be lit up? Do you want to be enlightened and brightened and energized when you come into some of these spaces? And I think [that] was more evident during this time.

LS: That’s what I’ve experienced as well. People want a space that is reflective of them, that now has to be all these things at once, or at different times. Kendra, what you were saying too [about] these open-concept layouts. They’re amazing, and then you’ve got all your kids back home with you. You’ve got grandma sticking around. You’re in quarantine. What do you do? Let’s reconfigure everything so that we can push things around and give ourselves that space. And in that idea of being bolder, and yet at the same time, not being ostentatious. That is a very Bay Area thing. I’m from L.A. We’re flashy!



For the “Liquid Lounge” in the 2020 San Francisco Decorator Showcase, Tineke Triggs’ firm, A tistic Designs for Living, merged bold colors with geometric interest.

Leo, you’re based in the Castro. Jeff and Tineke, you’ve been in the City a long time. Kendra, you’re on the Peninsula. I was wondering how each of you feel about the impact of where we live on the world of design?

JS: I think a lot of people are pretty traditional in and around San Francisco proper, at least. And I’m sure that bleeds out through the Peninsula even deeper. Design’s exciting, and it’s getting more eyes on it these days specifically. I see all these Presidio Heights and Pacific Heights and Mission homes... the classic architecture, the interior architecture, is amazing to play with. I just got a new project and we’re going to do really colorful things in this very white austere, stodgy, old home. And I’m so fired up. This might be the coolest one yet. Because it’s a big foyer. Giant formal living room. Giant living room. One of those houses. You get these all the time, Kendra.

KN: You have really beautiful construction, we get square footage! ... I feel like when you do have smaller spaces, people really understand they want to fill their spaces with intentional, quality items. When you’re dealing with these 10,000-square-foot homes, people don’t really care about the quality in every single room when just three people live there. So that’s something we’re educating all the time — is the quality of items.

LC: Yeah, that’s really interesting here in the City. The quality of the architecture is fantastic. What I’ve seen in the 10 years I’ve been here is that kind of change from the white box, modern aesthetic and more of an embrace of

the old, what’s been around. We have a heritage that we have to be cognizant of here in San Francisco.

TT: Technology has always been leading for us. So everybody’s doing electronic drapery, digital art. I think those things are always going to be technologically advanced, and I think we get to some of those earlier than other areas. My opinion of the strengths of this city are, besides its physical location, the food industry and the art industry have always been amazing here. Everybody’s building barbecues and spending more time making food. I have done more kitchens this summer than I have done in my career.



Top: For Nash Design Group's clients, it's all about designated spaces, fewer formalities and certainly, plenty of home offices.

Bottom: A Noe Valley project by Leo Cesareo Design layers metallic hues with a chandelier by The Future Perfect and chairs by Twentieth.

What trends are you seeing in textiles or color palette? I'm also mindful of how you calibrate a trend for a client — considering they are in the space for more than a season — or as you have said to me, Jeff, perhaps they only remodel or refurbish a home a few times in their lifetime.

JS: I think the value in our studio is we're trying to make places the best we can to be sophisticated, cool and artistic, and have a shelf life. I feel like one of my best assets is that I have watched furniture trends for 20 years, and I can identify what's just going to be redone, or has already been done. And I try and constantly look out and avoid trends, quite honestly. In terms of color, our studio is not afraid of color. We will do all of it.

KN: The 'burb clients are really more open to color like they've never been.

They're really shying away from the grays. Thank goodness. So right now, I feel like anything goes. But the most important trend, I would say, which Jeff elaborated on earlier, are the layers. The layers upon layers. When we are given the opportunity to do that, and people see it, they just yearn for more of it.

TT: The richer, deeper jewel tones [are] starting to pop back in and the grays [are] being replaced with the greige, the beige gray, and then a lot more texture. If I don't

work with color, it's got to have texture. And then the other thing that's huge right now is greenery, tons of greenery, putting in plants and succulents into bookshelves and plants in the corner, that's all back. I think this whole lack of connection to the outdoors and not being out and about has really brought that trend in, too.

LC: Absolutely. Textures, layers. Textures more than patterns. I think a lot of times people are really open to having a lot of different textural things in their home, and how that layers up. It's almost like they know something's missing.

JS: One of the stories I tell clients — especially if they're new at design — I say, "My dream for you is to walk around at the end of the project and have a glass of wine with your husband or with your wife and just say, 'I'm so glad we did it right. And we did it the whole way.'" That's what I wish for them. **NHC**

Our Panelists

Leo Cesareo, *Leo Cesareo Design*. Cesareo is a San Francisco-based artist and designer who has worked with some of the design world's premiere interior designers, including **Steven Volpe**, **Jay Jeffers** and **Lauren Ceremia**. A graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, Cesareo's approach to space and composition draws from his formal education in the visual arts.



Kendra Nash, *Nash Design Group*. Born and raised in Atherton, Kendra Nicholas Nash started Nash Design Group in 2011, after cutting her teeth in the Silicon Valley real estate market. With her work spanning the entire Peninsula, Nash Design Group collaborates closely with architects and builders in the construction phase, and then continues through furnishings and finishing touches.



Jeff Schlarb, *Jeff Schlarb Design Studio*. Jeff Schlarb Design Studio delivers a classic contemporary body of work from its Presidio Heights studio in San Francisco. The firm's expertise includes custom decoration projects, interior design for new construction, and kitchen and bathroom renovations. Schlarb draws on time spent living in Europe, traveling the globe and an earnest pursuit to seize every day.



Tineke Triggs, *Artistic Designs for Living*. Inspired by designers who broke away from the pack, Triggs is known for creating soulful, artistic and imaginative interiors. By mastering both the art and science of design, her work gives rise to a unique form of design mixology. When not designing, the veteran of six San Francisco Decorator Showcases enjoys working on her kick-boxing game, family time on the beach, and traveling down the coast with her vintage 1973 Airstream in tow.

