

Coit Tower and the S.F. Bay are visible from the living room. OPPOSITE The entry hall is enlivened by a tall chalkboard and silver moldings by Karin Wikstrom.

HIGH SHINE

A PAIR OF WINEMAKERS HAS TRANSFORMED AN EVERYDAY SAN FRANCISCO APARTMENT INTO A BREATHTAKING PIED-À-TERRE

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PHOTOGRAPHED BY LISA ROMEREIN





T

hree years ago, when newly-engaged Jean-Charles Boisset and Gina Gallo went house-hunting in San Francisco for a pied-à-terre, their realtor introduced them to architect Andrew Skurman.

It was a serendipitous encounter. Skurman not only helped them select a superb apartment on the 16th floor of a venerable Art Deco building on the crest of Nob Hill, but he was also hired to turn its rather dated and dowdy floor plan and interiors into a sparkling aerie.

"Andy quickly suggested an elegant architectural concept to transform a very conventional layout of small rooms into a dramatic place for entertaining," says French-born Boisset, proprietor of Boisset Family Estates. The company, which he runs with his sister Nathalie, is an international wine powerhouse with properties in Burgundy, Beaujolais, the Rhône Valley, California and Canada. Gina Gallo Boisset, a granddaughter of Julio Gallo, now has a winery with her brother, Matt. The couple met five years ago at an international wine event.

"Jean-Charles and Gina were inspiring clients because they had bold and imaginative ideas," says Skurman, who is known for his rigorously classical architecture and has had his own firm in San Francisco for the past decade.



The expansive living-dining space features a wall of mirrored French doors to multiply the apartment's downtown views. Boisset found the feather chandeliers in Japan. OPPOSITE Gina Gallo Boisset and Jean-Charles Boisset.



"They love to entertain, and they had a vision of this apartment as a super-glamorous escape, a home in the sky." (They also have residences in France and California's wine country.)

The original 1,800-square-foot layout included two small bedrooms, a tiny living room and an outdated kitchen—problematic for Gallo Boisset, who loves to cook.

The worst offense: With its warren of poky rooms, the space did nothing to showcase the apartment's extraordinary panoramic views (the Golden Gate Bridge looms to the north, the Bay Bridge stretches to the east, and even the nearby spire of Grace Cathedral is visible from bedroom windows).

Zigzag slivers of the bay, shimmering in the early morning, form a silvery backdrop to the concrete towers of the Financial District and rooftop terraces of Chinatown far below. At night, bright stars and city lights turn the apartment into an Astaire and Rogers-worthy fantasy set.

"My vision was to create drama by taking down walls and making one sumptuous living-and-dining room across the whole apartment," says Skurman.

Inspired by the sparkling Galerie des Glaces in Versailles, he proposed building a wall of mirrored French doors along one side, not only to increase the apparent size of the

room, but also to double and triple the effect of the changing light and views. The wall also conceals a series of cabinets where the couple's extensive collection of Baccarat carafes, decanters and wine glasses is stashed. And, part of it hides the kitchen pass-through, adjacent to the dining area. Two bedrooms were turned into a large, sunny one with a mirrored bathroom and walk-in closets. "Andy took a small apartment, redefined the spaces in a very logical manner, and made it feel grand," says Boisset.

As construction proceeded, the couple hired San Francisco interior designers Andrew Fisher and Jeffrey Weisman, known for their theatrical effects and subtle sense of hue. "Andrew had devised a brilliant plan with exquisite details, and we developed a color scheme of taupes, grays and slate," says Weisman. Artist Karin Wikstrom added silver-leaf decorative painting to the moldings and window frames.

"The rich, dark-brown CONTINUED ON PAGE 158

Baccarat crystal sconces create a mesmerizing effect in the bathroom, which has white tasso marble counters and a luxurious tub. OPPOSITE The plush master bedroom.



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FROM TOP Philippe Starck for Baccarat Glass Class chairs encircle a stainless steel dining table by Metropolis Metalworks. A collection of decanters on the bar. A button-tufted, patent-leather chaise longue sits in one corner of the living space.



The couple entertains often, and here they gather with friends to pop bottles of sparkling wine after work or attending the opera or symphony.

Her low-key approach to life extends to her acting style, which means she's typically cast as the idealized girl next door. Bilson is ready for something a little less expected, so she has reunited with Schwartz for a "spoof on those 'Ghost Whisperer' kinds of shows," called "Ghost Angeles," which the two are developing for ABC.

"Josh knows me so well. I mean, he's married to my best friend. We're all very close," she says. "He knows how I deliver a line. He knows that I can be, you know, funny. It's much harder to be funny than it is to act in a drama. But I'm up for it." Whatever's next for the brown-eyed beauty—a network comedy of her own, or a mini home-design empire—it's likely she'll do it with style.

And without anybody seeing her try. •

HIGH SHINE

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floors were left bare, to maintain the light-hearted feeling," explains Fisher

Weisman and Fisher also devised ethereal curtains with two layers of gauzy, high-tech Gretchen Bellinger fabric of gold floating over silver. Even on a foggy day they light up the room. "It is almost as if we hung ballgowns on each window, it is so frivolous and fun," says Weisman. As a final touch, the ceiling was given a silver-leaf finish, so that the whole room appears to float.

Meanwhile, Boisset and Gallo Boisset traveled to Paris to order their dream furniture. "We wanted to revisit classic French styles like Jacob and Empire designs, as well as Louis XIV furniture, albeit with a modern touch," says Boisset, who is equally passionate about his native country's *l'art de vivre* as he is about wine.

They ordered chic Cabriolet-style chairs, glorious chaise longues and perfectly proper medallion-backed chairs from Gilles Nouailhac, a Parisian furniture maker, but had them finished with a bold platinum-leaf finish. To further emphasize their modern tastes, the couple had pieces upholstered in silver leather and silk satin, shocking pink velvet and a vivid green. Cushions and pillows were ordered in faux chinchilla, fox and an ivory mink. The effect is witty and flirty—with plenty of panache.

In the evening, Boisset will produce,

from his extensive wine cellar, a JCB No. 21 Cremant Rosé, a bubbly apéritif evocative of the couple's life in France. Or Gallo Boisset may pour a Gallo Family Estate 2007 Sonoma Chardonnay.

"Our apartment is high in the sky, so our wines bring us back down to earth, giving a taste of the terroirs that we both love," says Boisset.

"The apartment has been such a celebration," says Gallo Boisset. "We are so happy our friends and family can enjoy it with us." •

SPANISH MASTER

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extensive collection of the Basque-born designer's couture; as a teen he was attracted to the "potency of the name" and the fact that there was "something dramatic or unexpected in the construction of every piece." Beginning with a 1960s suit at "jumble fair" in England, he hasn't stopped acquiring since.

First assembling a jewel-box version of the show for the Manhattan townhouse-turned institute this past October, Bowles then set his sights on a larger-than-life display at the de Young Museum.

Balenciaga's origins dovetail with powerful themes. The largely self-taught Spaniard spent his early years pondering the priesthood, and when he finally decamped to Paris at the ripe age of 40, a spartan mentality followed. Colleagues called the notoriously press-shy designer's salon "monastic," populated by a tight-knit team that viewed their work almost parallel to a religious vocation. "The atmosphere was probably unlike that of the other couture houses in Paris," notes Bowles. "The others were much more joyous and giddy and lighthearted."

The cool, modest lines of vestments and monks' cassocks re-emerge in the designer's medieval coats. A Cardinal's balloon sleeves in luscious red velvet adorn others. Even uncomplicated, seamless draping similar to the garbed Madonnas carried through village streets during Holy Week appear to have inspired his designs.

It's not all genuflection, though. The spicier side of Balenciaga's heritage comes through with his references to national pastimes. "A ruffle must be intelligent," Balenciaga once told his protégé Hubert

de Givenchy. The 1950s look was heavily influenced by Balenciaga's take on the flamenco dancer. The *Bata de cola* (a short, ruffled train), flounces, hats evoke a flower tucked behind one ear, and *lunares* (polka dots) were manipulated and reimagined. Balenciaga's storied partnerships with textile houses, such as Abraham in Switzerland, allowed for further improvisation. When he developed a lightweight silk gauze fabric called gazar with Abraham, garments practically came alive with "a sense of captured movement, caught in a breeze," says Bowles.

The sport of bullfighting, which Balenciaga notoriously hated, was also transformed into something of a punctuation mark. Bowles brought in pieces with *Borlones* (pom pom tassels), braid trimming, paillettes and heavy beading. A structured matador's bolero adds discipline to soft, elegant evening wear. Carnations are transformed into prints and embroidery, and even a riff on the quirky black matador hat, paired with a full-skirted gown with a long train, makes something light out of a ritual entrenched in violence.

Born in the fishing town of Guetaria, the designer spent the early part of his career in San Sebastián—the watering hole for the Spanish Monarchy—dressing members of aristocracy, including Queen Marie Christine and the Marqués de Casa Torres, who would be his first patroness. Through his agile fingers, structure and fabric took on a courtly demeanor. You can see the marks of royalty in his farthingales—an approximation of the hoop skirt—peplums, armor-like embroidery, fur trims and capelets.

These ensembles were equally inspired by the painters of Spain. The "Infanta" silhouette of the late '40s and '50s was named for the 17th-century portraits of the Infanta Margarita Theresa of Spain by Diego Velázquez. Featuring tight, almost tubular bodices joined to wide, very full skirts, in 1947, *Vogue* called the look the "flatterer of the season" because it could "flow over—gloss over—larger than ideal hips." Later in his career, Francisco Goya's dour ladies in black lace mantillas were translated abstractly into cabbage-shaped, face-framing sartorial sculpture. But, for Bowles, who has launched multiple exhibitions, including 2001's "Jacqueline Kennedy: The White House Years" for the Museum of Metropolitan Art, the biggest