

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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SAN FRANCISCO REVIVAL

A WORN-OUT APARTMENT IS REWORKED IN PACIFIC HEIGHTS

*Interior Design by Suzanne Tucker, ASID
Architecture by Andrew Skurman, AIA
Text by Penelope Rowlands/Photography by Jamie Hadley*



“We needed to make better use of the spaces,” says Suzanne Tucker of her clients’ San Francisco apartment, which she collaborated on

with architect Andrew Skurman. TOP: The former entrance hall. ABOVE: The new library. Torchères, Christie’s. Marvin Alexander sconces.

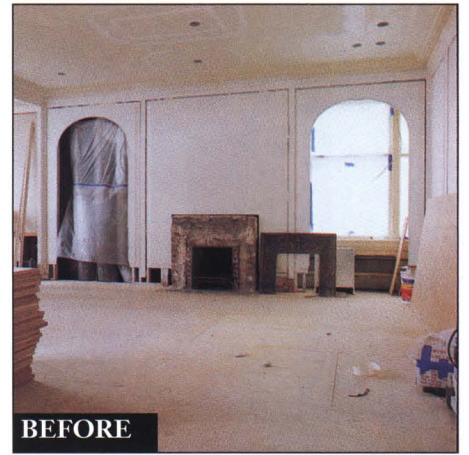
RIGHT: A window was covered and two arched recesses put into the living room. BELOW: "I took the overall colors from the coromandel

screen and the antique carpet," says Tucker. Pierre Frey floral chair fabric. Ushak rug from Beauvais. Brunschwig & Fils sofa fabric.

When designer Suzanne Tucker was hired to work on a 1940s apartment in San Francisco's Pacific Heights, her clients—a Swedish couple now residing in California—planned on "just giving a coat of paint" to the well-preserved interior. But Tucker once worked with Michael Tay-

lor, and she shares the legendary decorator's preoccupation with scale. "I'm very strong on getting the architecture in place first," says Tucker, whose firm, Tucker & Marks, is based in San Francisco. "If the bones aren't right to begin with, everything is off."

How these particular bones should be reset was immediately obvious to Tuck-



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LEFT: "The paneling and moldings were stripped from the living room; we wanted to keep things simple and understated." BELOW: Picasso's

Femme au Chignon, 1957, is in the recess. Christopher Norman fabrics for window seat pillows and balloon draperies. Bergères, Christie's.

er, whose quarrels with the place began, quite literally, at its front door. "There was no graceful transition between the small elevator area and an intimate private home," she says. Instead, visitors arriving at the floor walked from one almost wastefully large space to another as they stepped from the elevator landing

to the apartment's entrance hall. Collaborating with architect Andrew Skurman, Tucker moved the entrance wall outward, reducing the size of the landing and creating a new area within the residence: a perfectly square vestibule with an intricate inlaid floor made of tulip, ebony and other exotic woods.



RIGHT: "The dining room had a boxy configuration and dark wood walls and floor," recalls Tucker. BELOW: "The arch now softens the

space." A mid-18th-century Flemish verdure tapestry faces an Irish Neoclassical mahogany table and a suite of English cane-back chairs.

Beyond the vestibule, Tucker transformed the once vast entrance hall into a library. The wall paneling and bookshelves she installed are of a rich English brown oak ("We bought it as huge logs"); after undergoing "a bit of distressing, a bit of aging," they look as if they'd been lifted from one of England's state-

ly homes. The coffered ceiling, which had long since begun to sag, was removed. ("We simplified the ceiling because we complicated the walls," Tucker explains.) To preserve the integrity of the paneling, some doors were taken out or artfully disguised.

In every room, Tucker aimed for a qui-



“The clients asked for European elegance,” says Tucker (below left).
BELOW RIGHT: An extended arch connects the master bedroom to a

dressing room. RIGHT: “We created a storage area within the arch.” Cowtan & Tout drapery fabric over Bruntschwig & Fils sheers. Stark carpet.



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et opulence, as her clients dislike anything brassy or bright. “I can’t stand it when you come in and everything seems to shine and sparkle,” the wife comments. Wherever possible, Tucker toned things down, replacing marble-tile floors with tempered Versailles parquetry. Also tamed were the sharply rectilinear doorways, which became archways; these work together throughout the space, “repeating the arches in an enfilade effect,” she points out. Even the walls now have a long-established look, having been finished with a subtle English glaze by noted Bay Area custom finisher Elisa Stancil. “It gives an aged look, a permanence,” Tucker says. “It softens everything.”

An old European atmosphere suited the clients. The wife wanted the rooms to recall the serene interiors of her grandparents’ apartment in Göteborg, the Swedish port city, and their summer house nearby. During her childhood visits she became intimately acquainted with their antique furniture by playing hide-and-seek under and behind the tables, sofas and chairs.

The living room provides a perfect illustration of Tucker’s restrained approach. It imparts what she describes as “a classical feeling, a sense of tradition.” But it wasn’t always so. Here too, Tucker removed moldings and changed the wall paneling. To heighten the symme-

try, she covered a window to the right of the fireplace, putting in its place one of two softly arched recesses that flank the carved Louis XVI limestone mantel.

“What started this room was the Ushak rug and the coromandel screen,” she says. “They inspired the colors.” She used muted tones and, because she “didn’t want a lot to compete with the antiques,” kept pattern to a minimum, creating depth and interest by juxtaposing a variety of textures and materials. A pair of Louis XVI bergères, for example, upholstered in an apricot gauffraged velvet, bracket a circa 1800 Dutch inlaid marquetry center table. Although there are some important pieces, nothing shouts for attention.

Subtlety prevails in the adjacent dining room as well, which is dominated by a large Flemish tapestry. Joined by wide archways, the dining and living rooms are united by compatible yet distinct colors. “They needed to complement each other but also stand on their own,” says Tucker.

In deference to the view—the rooms look out to the Golden Gate Bridge and the Marin County hills—she opted for transparency: “I wanted to keep to something light, something you’d be able to see through,” she says of the English cane-back chairs she chose for both the main dining table and the Directoire table in the window niche.

As for the view, it’s a classic San Francisco postcard—majestic bridge, passing ships, brilliant bay—and the owners never tire of it. From a decorator’s perspective, though, even a great vista can be a complication. “In view apartments, you’re always drawn to the windows,” remarks Tucker. Banquettes at the dining

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