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O. J. and Gary Shansby enlisted Andrew Skurman Architects and decorator Suzanne Tucker of Tucker & Marks to transform their San Francisco apartment in a neoclassical style reflective of its Beaux Arts building. In the living room, whose palette is drawn from the painting by Nathan Oliveira and the antique Oushak carpet from Mansour, an 18th-century Spanish mirror hangs above a Louis XV mantel flanked by Napoléon III side tables from Therien & Co. The bergères are upholstered in a Brunswig & Fils velvet, the table lamps at left are repurposed Han-dynasty jars, and the linen wall covering is by Rose Tarlow Melrose House. For details see Sources.

wish fulfillment

When a San Francisco couple land an apartment in their dream building, decorator Suzanne Tucker and architect Andrew Skurman complete the fantasy

TEXT BY PETER HALDEMAN PHOTOGRAPHY BY PIETER ESTERSOHN PRODUCED BY HOWARD CHRISTIAN



In 1924 Conrad Alfred Meussdorffer, then the premier architect of luxury apartment buildings in San Francisco, completed a career-capping project: a Beaux Arts structure in the heart of Pacific Heights whose 11 full-floor units each offer scenic views encompassing the San Francisco Bay, Lafayette Park, and a lovely camphor laurel–shaded courtyard. “It’s considered the best building in the city,” declares Gary Shansby, an entrepreneur (he currently serves as chairman and CEO of Partida Tequila, a brand he founded in 2001) who knows an opportunity when he sees one—and who not long ago seized on the unusual chance to acquire one of those units. “I happened to call a guy who lived there on another matter, and I said, ‘By the way, my wife has always wanted to live in the building. If an opening ever comes up, let me know.’ And he said, ‘It’s funny you say that, because a place downstairs is about to hit the market.’”

This is a story shaped by odd serendipity. After Gary and his wife, O. J., purchased the apartment (via preemptive bid), they contacted Suzanne Tucker, the San Francisco–based interior designer who had decorated their previous home, on Nob Hill, as well as a vineyard property the couple owned in Sonoma.

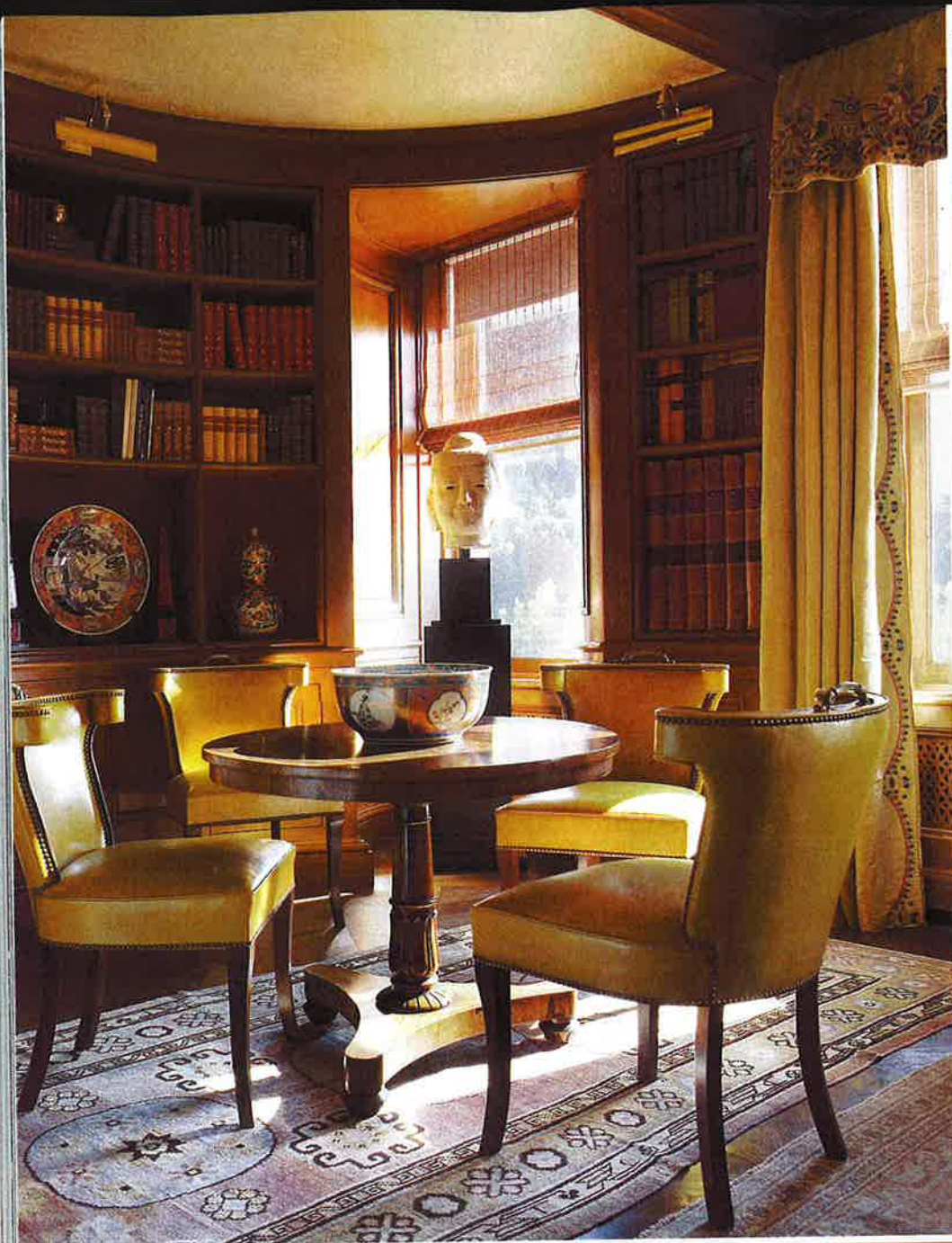
“I said, ‘Oh, my favorite building in the city!’” recalls Tucker, who had already redone another floor there. She in turn steered her clients to architect Andrew Skurman; he had also worked at the address and regards it as “the most gorgeous apartment house in San Francisco.” This was more luck for the Shansbys, who had in mind both reconfiguring the private quarters and revamping the interiors in a French style consistent with the neoclassical façade.

Skurman began by gutting the five-bedroom space, carving out a new master wing with his-and-her studies, dressing rooms, and baths, as well as a single sizable bedroom. He also softened the apartment’s straight lines by designing an oval entrance hall with a ceiling dome, adding another dome in the master bedroom, and constructing a graceful apse in the library. Like many



Clockwise from left: Doric columns set off the living room alcove, where windows frame sweeping views of San Francisco Bay; the sofa is upholstered in a fabric by Clarence House, and the gilded-walnut chairs are by Michael Taylor. Tiled with Belgian marble, the foyer floor makes a dramatic statement; the George III mirrors and demilune tables are all from Kentshire Galleries. A work on paper by Richard Diebenkorn is grouped with a 19th-century English desk and armchair; the gourd lamp is a vintage design by Robert Kuo.





Clockwise from top left: A 19th-century English center table from Florian Papp and chairs by Soane Britain anchor the library's apse. Embroidery by Chelsea Editions embellishes the window treatments; the framed work on paper is by Frank Stella. The kitchen's range is by Viking. A Directoire dining table is paired with a suite of Queen Anne-style armchairs by Gregorius Pineo; the Biedermeier chandelier is from Therien & Co., the drawing is by Richard Serra, and the gilded-bronze sculpture at left is by Fletcher Benton. **Opposite:** Gary's study is paneled in rift-sawn oak; the curtains are of a Cowtan & Tout print, and the André Arbus desk and Khotan rug are both vintage.

classic Beaux Arts apartments, the Shansbys' home now has gently curved crown moldings and elegant plasterwork, with fluted pilasters surrounding the doors and windows. (The dining room's etched-mirror moldings, inlay, and door panels are the only details that survive from the preexisting interiors, which were designed by Valerian Rybar and Jean-François Daigre.)

For her part, Tucker was charged with composing what she calls "a space that would be very livable for the Shansbys but also have a certain amount of drama to match those incredible panoramic views." It's hard to beat the impact of stepping off an elevator and into a foyer with spiraling-checkerboard-pattern marble underfoot. A pair of George III mirrors and complementary demilune tables flank the entrance to the living room—a sumptuous space warmed by a 19th-century Oushak whose cinnamon and coral tones balance the harsh light off the bay and, notes the designer, "make everyone look beautiful." English furnishings from the couple's former apartment mingle smartly with newly acquired Continental pieces—German and Italian side tables, an 18th-century Spanish mirror over a Louis XV mantel—while works by Robert Motherwell, Richard Diebenkorn, and David Hockney "give a little edge to the traditional upholstery and antiques," Tucker says. At the far end of the living room, surrounded by Doric columns and framing a vista of the bay, is an exotically tasseled and trimmed nook that she refers to as the "come-sit-next-to-me-and-drink-cocktails-and-tell-me-everything alcove." The owners simply call it "the cove."

The library is dramatic in its own fashion, with walnut paneling and the handsome apse, where the Shansbys like to dine at a 19th-century English table encircled by side chairs that Tucker has dressed in a chartreuse leather. Across the foyer, a corridor leads to the grand master suite. Each of its rooms is tailor-made to the couple's specifications, but none is quite as luxurious as O.J.'s dressing room, which features a crystal light fixture, a button-tufted chaise longue, and tiger-print silk carpeting. "If I'm looking for my wife, I can almost always find her in there," Gary says with a laugh.

The Shansbys are as proud of their apartment as they are of the building it occupies. "We knew everything that was going in, but to actually see it for the first time was overwhelming," O.J. confides. The big reveal happened to fall on a splendid spring afternoon. "When O.J. and I walked through the front door, there were trays of caviar and Champagne," recalls Gary, beaming. Suffice it to say the two had plenty to toast: their designer, their architect—and the chance phone call that led them to their dream address. □



Clockwise from left: Tucker chose a Colefax and Fowler fabric for the master suite's curtains and bed hangings, the latter of which are lined with the same Schumacher silk used for the bed skirt; the chandelier is by Quatrain, and the secretary is Chippendale. An Ironies light fixture, a chaise longue clad in a Christopher Hyland silk velvet, and a V'Soske carpet lend a luxurious feel to O.J.'s dressing room. Her husband's bathroom features a Marvin Alexander pendant light and floor tiles from Waterworks.

