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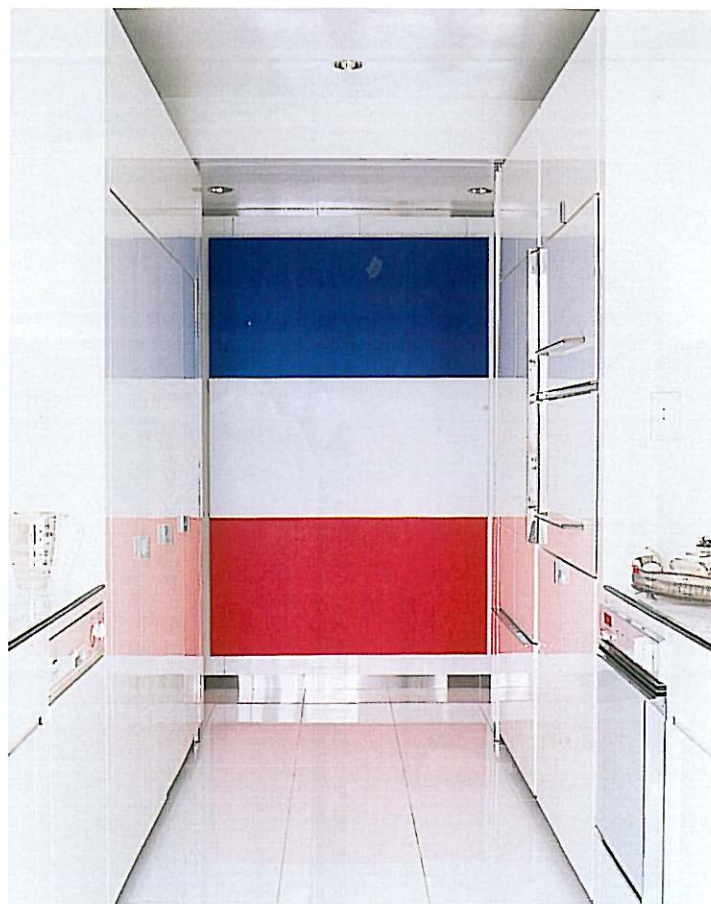
## NORTHERN LIGHT

AN ETHEREAL APARTMENT HIGH ABOVE NOB HILL IS THE PERFECT SETTING FOR ANDREW AND FRANÇOISE SKURMAI'S DRAMATIC ART COLLECTION

BY DIANE DORRANS SAEKS  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY LISA ROMERINI



19th century Venetian mirrors, acquired in Paris, grace the bedroom wall. OPPOSITE *Venus Refuses the Apple*, a new plaster sculpture by Françoise Skurman, stands in the bedroom. The floor is white glass Japanese tile.



“WHEN I was growing up in Paris, I dreamed of designing a chic white and silver apartment,” said sculptor Françoise Skurman. “Now I’m living my fantasy in San Francisco. It’s all about beauty—and the luminous white interior.”

Françoise and Andrew Skurman’s route to that chic apartment is a fascinating story of chance and timing. After Françoise and Andrew were married in Paris eight years ago, they returned to San Francisco and set up house in a charming Arts and Crafts shingled cottage in Seacliff. Restless to move out of the foggy area, they obsessively checked real estate offerings on the Internet, and eventually discovered that a familiar 15th-floor, one bedroom apartment on Nob Hill was for sale.

“The moment I read the description, ‘all-white apartment,’ and saw pictures of the rooms, I knew it was an interior I had planned when I was studio director at Gensler 15 years earlier,” says Andrew. “We dashed over to see it and fell in love.”

The pure white jewel-box of an apartment, the floorplans of which Andrew had originally drafted before interior designer Orlando Diaz-Azcuy devised the decor scheme, was still in pristine condition.

“We didn’t have to change a thing,” said Françoise.

The configuration of the rooms, the rigorousness and repetition of immaculate white lacquer walls and white glass floors throughout, not to mention its lightness, lends the apartment a sense of calm and serenity.

For Andrew, a self-professed perfectionist, the immaculate walls and floors of Neoparium Japanese white glass by Nippon Electric Glass created the ideal gallery for the couple’s art and antiques. The walls had been lacquered in 10 layers of paint, and they still look as luxurious as the day they were installed.

“When everything is stripped down as it is here, all surfaces and finishes must be precise, exacting and superbly crafted to convey a sense of elegance,” says Andrew.

Skurman, founder of the 15-year-old firm Andrew Skurman Architects, had first planned the interior architecture for a discerning client

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Damien Hirst's *Bromphenol Blue-Cylene Cyanol Dye Solution*, 2005, hovers above a stainless steel fireplace next to a pair of Louis XV fauteuils finished in silver leaf. OPPOSITE San Francisco architect Andrew Skurman and his wife, sculptor Françoise Skurman, in their Nob Hill apartment.





A Louis XVI recamier, an heirloom from her Parisian family, was restyled by Françoise with pale grey paint and white jacquard upholstery. The "Org" coffee table is by Fabio Novembre for Cappellini. The plaster torchères, circa 1940, are by Paris designer Serge Roche. Silver-leafed guéridons are from the estate of Gianni Versace.









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in the early '90s. In a daring leap of imagination, the owner acquiesced to Japanese white glass tile floors, in a framework of elaborately (and expensively) lacquered wood wall panels and white ceilings. Window mullions are polished stainless steel. The original took three years to complete.

The apartment's minimalist approach, then and now, is all the more surprising because Andrew Skurman's architectural practice specializes in superbly detailed classical architecture of the most rarefied style for clients around the world. He maintains offices in Paris and San Francisco.

After graduating with a degree in architecture from Cooper Union in New York, Andrew apprenticed with I.M. Pei and Partners, and later worked in the San Francisco offices of Skidmore Owings and Merrill, and as a studio director with Gensler.

"Our apartment is so different from anything I ever design for my clients," says Andrew. Friends who come for cocktails are entranced by the magical effect of shimmering glass floors, reflective walls framed with polished steel baseboards and ceiling reveals, and floor-to-ceiling windows with just a sliver of silken white curtain.

For the Skurmans, the apartment continues to captivate. Early morning light tints the walls in pearlescent



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Antique and modern collide in the dining room, where the glass tile floor shimmers beneath the tracery of Tom Dixon's dining table; Françoise perched her new plaster figure, *Dona Mariana*, atop a custom-made white-painted rope cabinet by Christian Astugueville; A Louis XV chair re-imagined in silver gilt by Rossi Antiques graces *Spiral Painting*, 1976, by Robert Slutzky; A 1940s cubist plaster bust was acquired at San Francisco's famed Fall Antiques Show; Alessandro Twombly's *The Fall of Icarus*, 2003, hangs above the dining table; Françoise sets her table with heirloom silver, peonies in porcelain Limoges vases and festive glasses hand-blown in Biot.



tones. Sunsets paint the rooms in a glow of rose pink. Later, the lights of the city flicker far below, and the apartment seems to float in the darkness.

“We’ve surrounded ourselves with family heirlooms and our contemporary art collection,” says Andrew, who has also commissioned avant-garde works like the dining table from today’s visionary artists and designers. The formerly dark-wood Louis XV chairs and six other pieces were restyled in silver leaf by Rossi Antiques—all in the manner of historic Parisian salons.

Among their museum-quality art collection are exquisite plaster sculptures by Françoise, who has been studying the past five years with sculptor Mark Zjawinski at the Academy of Art University. Her refined technique requires long, exacting hours in the studio, working in traditional fashion with a series of inspiring models.

“I am inspired by the work of Canovas and Giacometti,” she says. A tall slender figure, *Venus Refuses the Apple*, the artist’s most recent work, is poised to great effect in the bedroom, its paint barely dry.

“We’ll keep changing the art, so we never get bored,” said Françoise. “We moved in, and we’ve lived happily every after.” ●

The Louis XVI bed, inherited from Françoise’s family, is dressed with white pique by Scheuer Linens. The bedside tables were designed by Andrew Skurman. Paintings are by Stephanie Peek, left, and Olivier Debré, right. A girandole from the Yves Gastou antiques gallery in Paris stands on the bedside table.



