

GOOD SPIRITS

INTERIOR DESIGN: GARY HUTTON DESIGN
ARCHITECTURE: BUTLER ARM&EN ARCHITECTURE
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For a recent project, San Francisco designer Gary Hutton

had to determine the seating arrangements for a very unusual group of guests. "We put Coco Chanel and Mickey Mantle next to one another, because we thought they would probably get along," says Hutton with a laugh.

In real life, Chanel and Mantle never met each other. But they have dinner every night in spirit, in a full-floor co-op apartment in San Francisco's Russian Hill neighborhood. Their images, along with ten other notable figures, are on the inner backs of the dining chairs. The full list includes musical icons Mozart, Richard Strauss, Clara Schumann, Marian Anderson, and Bizabeth Sprague Coolidge, as well as writer Joseph Conrad, poet Edna St. Vincent Millay, environmentalist Kay Kerr, chemist Rosalind Franklin, and biologist Karl Landsteiner. The idea came from Hutton's clients. "I'd spent years trying to find dining room chairs that weren't boring and were also comfortable," says the wife, a retired attorney, who lives here with her husband, a research scientist. "It's a hall of our heroes dating back to our childhoods." Adds Hutton: "I thought the idea was fantastic. It's like a great English portraiture wall, but also like having guests at a dinner party."

Hutton was extremely familiar with the clients, since they had first hired him, along with Butler Amsden Architects, to renovate this same apartment 25 years ago. In 1995, this team transformed the unit by removing most of the dividing walls and opening up the space to the nearly 360-degree views. The space was darkly glamorous, with furnishings in navy blue and chrome, and an oak floor stained black.

In the intervening years, the couple had become interested in chamber music and wished to host house concerts. They brought the original team back to take out the fireplace wall between the library and the living room in order to create one 50-by-15-foot space, large enough to seat up to 50 people. But removing that wall affected the wife's closet, which made it an opportune time to change out her bathtub, and things snowballed from there. In the end, the design team redid almost everything, including the kitchen, and brought in new furnishings.

The newly designed residence takes confident strides into the world of color, which had always been integral to the wife's personal style. Knowing that his clients were devoted Francophiles, Hutton proposed a rug called Euphonie, which was designed by artist Christian Bérard, a close friend of Jean-Michel Frank. Hutton used this modern take on a floral tapestry rug to bridge the various personalities in the living room: A bright painting that the clients had brought back from Paris and pieces from their collection of contemporary art glass come together with a tailored Natuzzi sofa and a set of sculptural coffee tables in glass, chrome and mirror-polished stainless steel, including an original Knoll Lunario table. The rug's sorbet hues inspired Hutton to choose Moroso Victoria and Albert chairs in some of those delectable colors. "The design before was elegant and had a very clean look—I was always obsessing over any crumb that might fall on the floor," says the client. "Now, your eye is drawn to the bright red chair."







At one end of the living room is the performance space,

occupied by an 1892 Model C Steinway grand piano. Next to it is an antique French chaise longue, which Hutton found on 1stdibs, upholstered in a jaunty polka-dot fabric by Jean Paul Gaultier. During performances, acoustic curtains block sound from echoing off the glass. And every time the curtains come down, they are greeted with applause: They're printed with images of the Palais Garnier opera house, the couple's favorite concert venue.

The powder room offers another delightful surprise. Designed by architect Glenda Flaim at Butler Armsden with lighting designer Hiram Banks, the tiny mirrored space was inspired by the restroom at London's Nopi restaurant as well as Yayoi Kusama's Infinity Mirrored Rooms. Lit by color-changing LEDs shining through a perforated, mirror-polished stainless steel ceiling, the effect is akin to a planetarium on steroids. "It's this completely experiential thing—I'm jealous that I didn't do it," says Hutton, whose four-decade-long collaboration with art collector Chara Schreyer is documented in *Art House* (Assouline, 2016).

Because the guest room was off to one side and located behind the kitchen, Hutton concentrated on making it "really bright and cheerful and fun." His starting point was the Moooi Mini Tatami carpet, which showcases the latest technology—the vivid pixelated design has no repeats and is printed onto low-pile polyamide. He added another technological wonder, Oskar Zieta's Chippensteel chair. The structure is impossibly composed of metal pillows: thin sheets of steel are sealed around the edges and inflated with high-pressure air. On either side of the sleek Murphy bed designed by Butler Armsden, there are Contardi flexible sconces that Hutton customized by wrapping them in red and orange leather, reflected in a luminous custom table of Hutton's design.

In contrast, other spaces are in subdued shades of white and gray. The couple's calm bedroom puts the attention on a panoramic vista that includes both the Golden Gate and Alcatraz, while the sleek Ernestomeda kitchen, with soft gray lacquered cabinetry, overlooks city views. Creating a continuous, consistent backdrop was key to making all the spaces cohere. The stained oak floor was sanded down and given a metallic silver glaze. "All the surfaces are really similar and low-key, so that all the stuff the clients bring to it can be more important," says Hutton. "The space brings us a great deal of pleasure," says the client. "It gives us a lot of smiles." ■ Gary Hutton, garyhuttondesign.com; Butler Armsden Architects, butlerarmsden.com

