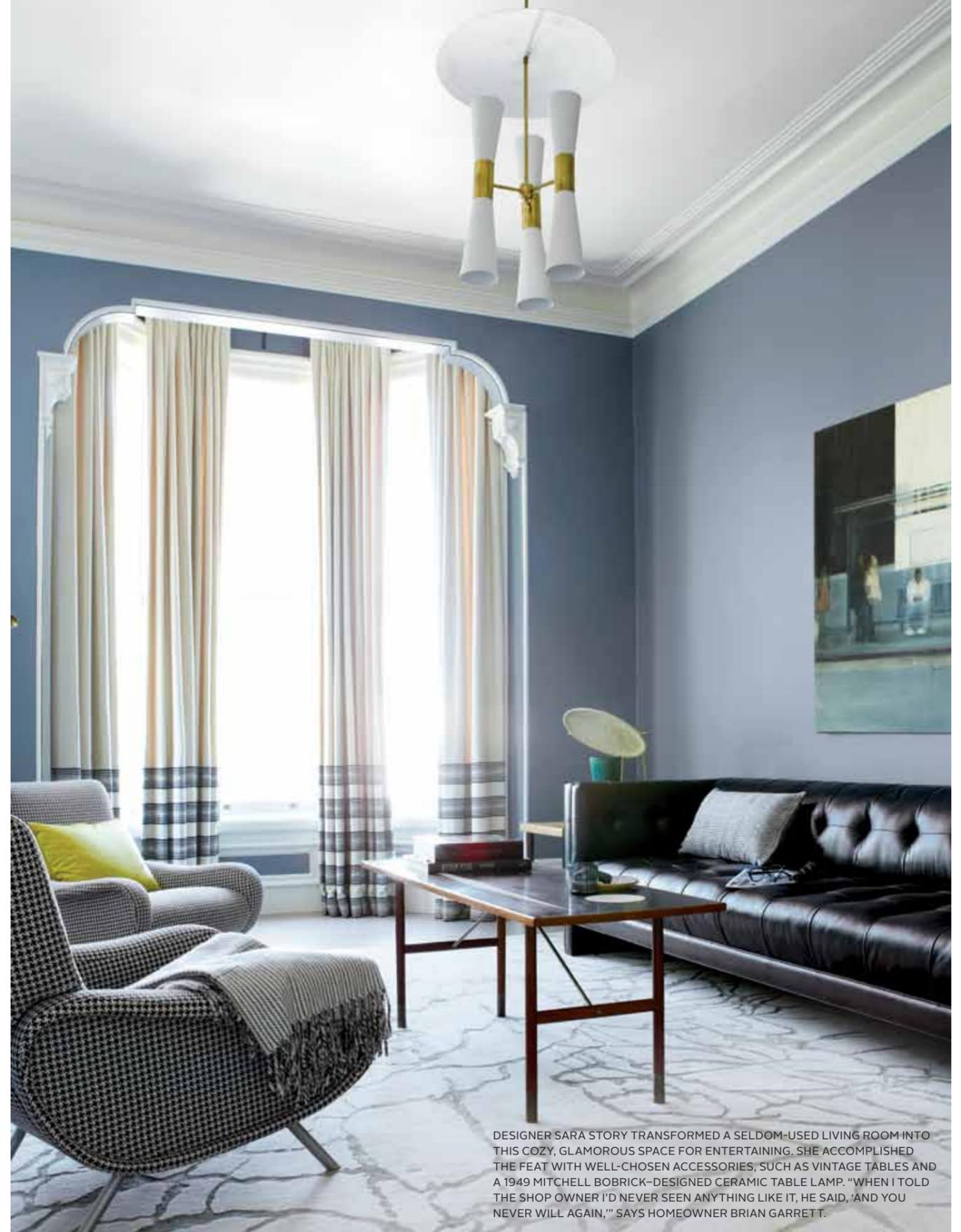




TAKING THE LIBERTY

An enduring 1878 home's most recent incarnation is a stylish urban oasis.



DESIGNER SARA STORY TRANSFORMED A SELDOM-USED LIVING ROOM INTO THIS COZY, GLAMOROUS SPACE FOR ENTERTAINING. SHE ACCOMPLISHED THE FEAT WITH WELL-CHOSEN ACCESSORIES, SUCH AS VINTAGE TABLES AND A 1949 MITCHELL BOBRICK-DESIGNED CERAMIC TABLE LAMP. "WHEN I TOLD THE SHOP OWNER I'D NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT, HE SAID, 'AND YOU NEVER WILL AGAIN,'" SAYS HOMEOWNER BRIAN GARRET.

A DISCERNING Eye WOULD NOTE

the difference between the houses on each side of 20th Street in San Francisco's Mission District: To the south, rows of ornate Victorians hold court, while to the north, stately Edwardians dominate the view. This slight architectural shift reflects one of the city's defining events—the 1906 earthquake. After the violent tremors, fires burned for three days and incinerated nearly 70 percent of the city. But firefighters and scrappy citizens rallied on this block, halting the flames on the northern side of the street by using water from a lone functioning hydrant at the intersection of Church and 20th streets (its gold-painted successor is still celebrated by local residents today).

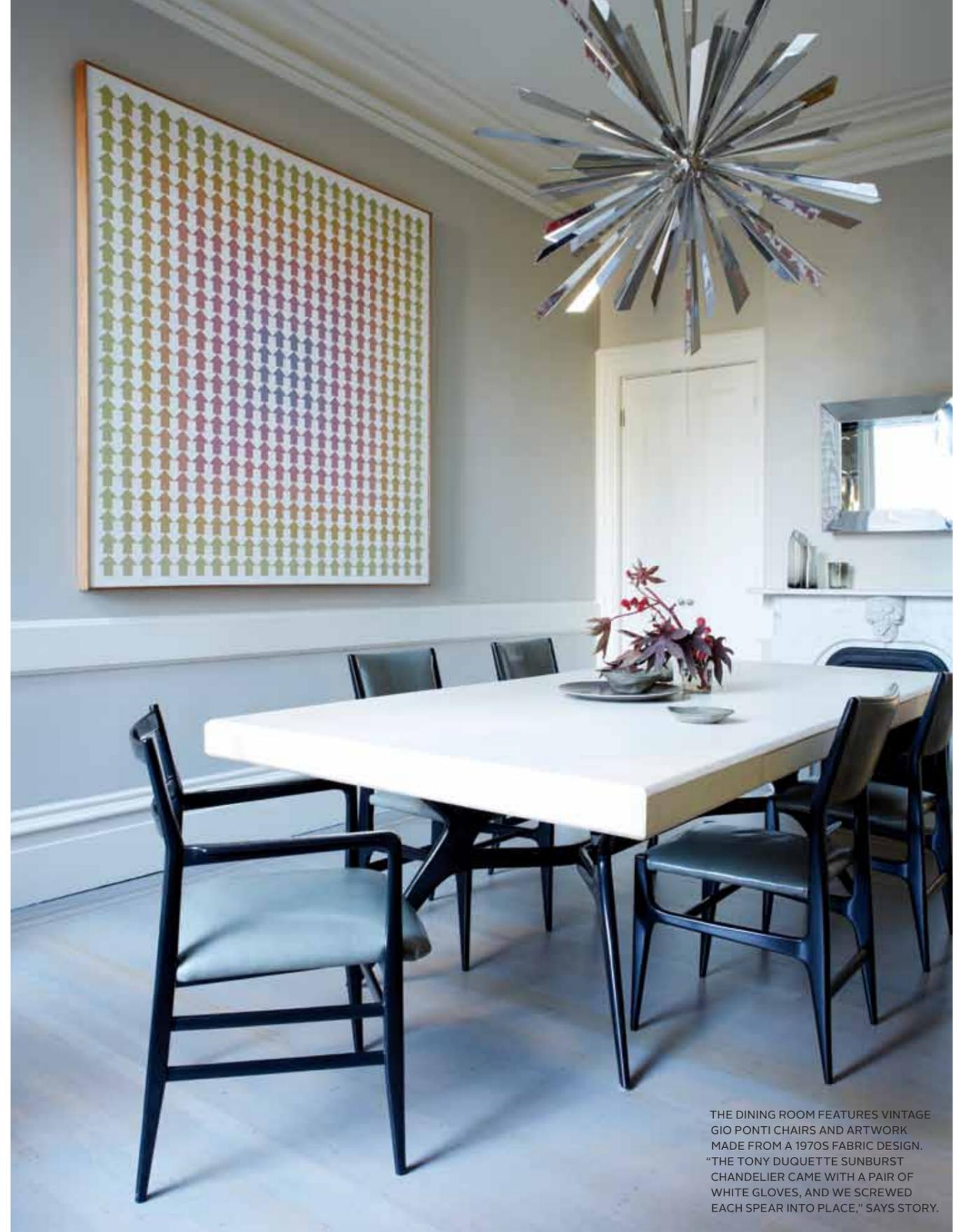
One block south of the firebreak, on Liberty Street, rows of pristine Victorian homes survived the disasters. It was here that homeowners Brian Garrett and Stephen Fronk staged a rescue of their own more than a century later, honoring the period details of their second-floor unit while updating its obsolete interiors. The 1,500-square-foot space included a dark, cramped kitchen, nonfunctional

closets, sloping floors and ceiling medallions that were still plumbed for pre-electricity gas lighting. It started when their downstairs neighbor began talking about renovating his apartment, and the couple jumped at the chance to expand at the same time. At the top of their list were festivity-friendly spaces and a proper master suite.



"Our MO was 'Don't fight the bone structure,'" says Fronk. "It's an amazing old house, so we wanted to respect what it is while making it more contemporary." Architect Todd Davis guided concurrent updates to both units, adding a new, modernized exterior aesthetic and more square footage for both levels. During construction, the mystery of the building's exact age was solved (most city housing records burned in the fires). "One day, our contractor sent us a text with a photo attached," says Garrett. "They'd opened up the walls, and written in chalk on the wooden substrate beneath the siding was the year 1878. It was a little bit like an archaeological discovery."

The finding strengthened the couple's resolve to preserve as much of their home as possible. They left the front living and dining rooms architecturally unchanged, but expanded and rearranged the rear of the home. To pull the new spaces together, they enlisted the help of one of their closest friends, New York designer Sara Story (a woman
TOP: STORY, WHO RECENTLY LAUNCHED A LINE OF WALLPAPER, CREATED THIS HAND-PAINTED BRANCH DESIGN, WHICH HAD TO BE INSTALLED BEFORE THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE TO THE ROOF DECK WENT IN. "IT MAKES YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE GOING UP INTO A TREE HOUSE," SAYS STEPHEN FRONK. LEFT: SEASONAL FOLIAGE DECORATES THE PARCHMENT-WRAPPED DINING ROOM TABLE.



THE DINING ROOM FEATURES VINTAGE GIO PONTI CHAIRS AND ARTWORK MADE FROM A 1970S FABRIC DESIGN. "THE TONY DUQUETTE SUNBURST CHANDELIER CAME WITH A PAIR OF WHITE GLOVES, AND WE SCREWED EACH SPEAR INTO PLACE," SAYS STORY.



whose aesthetic sensibility Garrett has trusted since they lived together as students at SF's Academy of Art University).

To create an open, airy kitchen that encouraged lingering over cocktails, Davis added a few hundred square feet (by incorporating the original laundry porch) and installed large, unobstructed windows framed with minimalist sheets of perforated steel to let in light and views of the oak trees in the backyard. New crown molding in the kitchen echoes the original plaster detailing of the home's front rooms.

The room across from the kitchen is something of a chameleon—depending on the situation, it acts as a home office, a guest room or an extension of the kitchen. To make the areas more cohesive, Story used the same marble for the kitchen island and the adjacent room's workspace. Pocket doors allow the division between the two spaces to disappear when guests crowd in for cocktails, and a minimalist white sectional sofa unfolds into a queen-size bed for overnight visitors. "Now it's the perfect place to congregate. People are always milling around the kitchen and lounging on the sofa," says the designer, a frequent guest at the couple's parties.

TOP: IN THE KITCHEN, BERTOIA BAR STOOLS AND CUSTOM MOROCCAN TILES ADD DIMENSION TO THE ABSOLUTE BLACK GRANITE COUNTERTOPS. **RIGHT:** TO ECHO THE COUPLE'S LOVE OF THE WATER, STORY CREATED OCEAN-THEMED WALLPAPER FOR THE WORKSPACE IN THE SPARE ROOM. **OPPOSITE:** IN THE BEDROOM, STORY DESIGNED AVOCADO-GREEN WALLPAPER AS AN ENERGIZING PUNCH OF COLOR AGAINST AN OTHERWISE SUBDUED PALETTE.





“LIBERTY STREET IS THIS BEAUTIFUL REFUGE”

Story also gave the living and dining rooms a facelift with fresh paint, refinished wood floors in a soft gray color and glamorous new lighting and decorative elements. The front room—“The most beautiful room in the house, but we almost never went in there before,” says Fronk—was transformed into an inviting lounge area with the addition of clubby, masculine furniture. Story designed a tufted leather sofa with a raised seat height for the tall homeowners and brought in a vintage ceramic table lamp with a reflecting shade. Striped pinch-pleat drapes soften the 11-foot bay windows overlooking the street. “Now we’re in here all the time,” says Garrett. Story can vouch for that. “They’ll call me on a Saturday night to tell me they’re having a dance party and wearing out the rug,” says the designer.

To create even more space, the architect punched through the unit’s ceiling, adding a roof deck at eye level with the treetops and outfitting it with a fire pit and quartzite-topped outdoor kitchen. “Now when we make plans with friends on Saturday nights, they want to come here first for drinks—or just have me make dinner instead,” says Fronk. “They’ve even made us cancel a hard-won reservation because they wanted to have a potluck dinner here.”

When cocktail hours with friends spill into prolonged revelry, the refreshed indoor and outdoor spaces encourage guests to linger. “We’re less than a block from the insanity of Valencia Street, but it feels like our own little oasis here,” says Fronk. Indeed, that feeling is what drew them to the home in the first place, the homeowners say. Fronk explains, “Because these pre-earthquake homes are intact on a narrow, tree-lined lane, Liberty Street is this beautiful refuge.”

ARCHITECT: TODD DAVIS ARCHITECTURE, SAN FRANCISCO
INTERIOR DESIGNER: SARA STORY DESIGN, NEW YORK

MATTE GRAY PAINT MODERNIZES THE HOME’S CURB APPEAL. “I LOVE THE JUXTAPOSITION OF THIS TRADITIONAL VICTORIAN FITTING IN WITH THE LIBERTY HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT IN FRONT, AND THE VERY MODERN DESIGN IN THE BACK,” SAYS ARCHITECT TODD DAVIS. **OPPOSITE:** FOR THE HOME’S BACKYARD-FACING WINDOWS, DAVIS DESIGNED PERFORATED STEEL FRAMES THAT PROVIDE PRIVACY FROM NEARBY NEIGHBORS WHILE LETTING IN LOADS OF LIGHT AND CASTING INTERESTING DAYTIME SHADOWS.

