



ARTFUL LODGERS

With the clients' collection as his guide, interior designer Jeff Schlarb conjures a metropolitan mood in Palo Alto.

By Anh-Minh Le // Photography by Aubrie Pick

Composing interiors that deftly mix classic architectural style with bold contemporary art is no easy feat. A couple in Palo Alto learned this firsthand when they attempted to decorate their 5,800-square-foot home on their own. Several furnishing purchases in, though, they were stuck. "I was reluctant to go and look for a designer because I'm really interested in design and thought about doing a lot of it myself," recalls the wife. "But it just got to be too much, and I needed someone to help me. I had some unresolved questions in my mind about what we should be doing, what direction we should take."

When she recognized that professional assistance was required, she enlisted Jeff Schlarb

Design Studio (jeffschlarb.com). "I went through his portfolio, and in every shot, there's something quirky or different, or a focal piece that's interesting," the homeowner continues. "It was in keeping with where we wanted to head—a little bit idiosyncratic, a little bit driven by the art in the room. ... There was a specific type of look that I was trying to achieve, which was edgy and modern without being stark; colorful without being gaudy; and bright and vibrant without everything clashing."

While the design schemes needed to be family-friendly—there are two young children in residence—they also needed to complement the "wildness" of the home's artful elements, says Schlarb. "Everything CONTINUED...



From top: In the living room, Monica Lundy's "Ladies of the Barbary Coast" hangs above the sofa, while a custom Tai Ping rug could be deemed a work of art too; the dining room includes beaded figures by Jan Huling, along with a Lim Miryang painting.



...CONTINUED couldn't be a star," he explains, "but everything had to have some personality so there wasn't one loud voice in the room." In the living room, Schlarb treated a 6-foot-tall Jurassic dinosaur bone—a birthday gift from the wife to the husband—like sculpture. He filled the rest of the space with a curved, button-tufted sofa with brass legs from Coup d'Etat, upholstered in a Perennials outdoor fabric; a handhammered iron chair and a kidney-shaped faux shagreen coffee table, both by Made Goods; A Modern Grand Tour's floor lamp topped with ostrich feathers; and a Jimmie Martin porter chair.

According to Schlarb, when he came on board, the clients were the furthest along with the dining room—for which they had already chosen a dark wooden table, tufted velvet chairs and a Lindsey Adelman chandelier. The interior designer's vision called for bringing in a cobalt blue, faceted Bungalow 5 mirror; a silver-leafed faux bois console by Phillips Collection that is made of resin; and Timorous Beasties' toile wallpaper in a custom cream-and-gray combination with silver accents. (The latter pattern is also reflected in the coffered ceiling's mirrored inlays.)

Between the living and dining rooms is the entry, which no doubt garners interest from visitors. With linear rugs in the rooms flanking this area, Schlarb "wanted to have an odd shape," he says of the entry's patchwork rug. "Instead of a cowhide or a circle, we went

with this erratic geometric shape from Kyle Bunting that we customized." The colors of the dyed hide components were influenced by the nearby art. The entry's sole piece of furniture is an antique mirror-and-table set from Austria that is at once rustic and offbeat. The mirror is bordered by bull horns, which also adorn the table legs. The tabletop is covered in green velvet and embellished with gold bullion fringe.

In the master bedroom, it was the clients who sourced the most whimsical touch: a series of handtufted rugs by Alexandra Kehayoglou. Using scraps from her family's Buenos Aires, Argentina, carpet factory, the artist devises rugs that mimic greenery—or, as Schlarb describes them, "little grasslike islands." Schlarb's contributions to the bedroom, including a Missoni pillow and a Noir chair upholstered in a large-scale plaid, take their cues from a pair of Chagall original lithographs above the bed.

In roughly six months' time, Schlarb and his team transformed the entire dwelling. "I would describe myself as a very demanding client," the wife admits. "But the whole experience was really seamless. They were really easy to work with—from big picture through to the details. And I just really liked them as people." The project was gratifying for Schlarb as well. "The more we do this work, the more we see that everybody needs something out of their houses; they need something out of their decor, emotionally," he says. "It's really magical as a designer to be able to deliver on that." ■

Clockwise from left: In the master bedroom, the homeowner painted what she calls the "portraits without faces"; a living room corner includes a dinosaur bone and limited-edition photographic prints by Achim Lippoth; in the backyard, the formality of the striped curtains is offset by fun hanging pod chairs; the entry features a custom Kyle Bunting rug and an antique piece with a sculptural quality.

