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TRADITIONAL HOME

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WHAT'S HOT: MUST-HAVE FURNITURE,
FABULOUS FABRICS & NEW SOFA ART



Angus and family on an undersized apartment overlooking San Francisco Bay.

BY CANDACE ORD MANROE PHOTOGRAPHY BY EDMUND BARR PRODUCED BY CARLA BREER HOWARD



Creamy backgrounds allow a pair of stellar gilded and black-painted Gustavian chairs to shine. French designer Jean-Michel Frank, prominent in the '30s, inspired the living room's ebonized oak coffee table, which Martha lightened with a lime rub. **Opposite:** Across the room, a small steel dining table detailed with a Greek key design is softened with velvet-covered antique seating found in Paris.

It was a case of truly, madly, deeply.

Interior designer Martha Angus and her husband, Christopher Flach, a Ph.D. psychologist-turned-art-photographer and financial-manager of Martha's business, took one look at the Nob Hill apartment's drop-dead views of the Golden Gate Bridge, gasped, and stammered, "Where do we sign?"

Certainly it wasn't the apartment itself that had them so enamored. "Two apartments had been patched together, and the architecture wasn't that great," acknowledges Martha. "But we were madly, madly in love with the views." The location struck gold not only with the bridge, but on two more fronts. "We're right across the street from our son Malcolm's school," Martha explains. "We can watch him play on the school's roof."

(That, wink-wink, was the real deal maker.) "And, I'm only two blocks from my office," she says, imbuing the real-estate drone of "location, location, location" with deeper meaning.

The unbeatable address made such limitations as the apartment's small size—it measures only 1,290 square feet—seem more manageable. Martha doubled the views with mirrors. "Mirrors are tacky," she grumbles, "but when you see the Golden Gate Bridge, you just want to see more of it." Then she got to work simplifying the backgrounds, gallery-style, to make the couple's collections of 18th-century antiques and modern art by giants like Christo, Lichtenstein, Warhol, and Joan Mitchell pop. "I sanded the floors, then I bleached the wits out of them to get



MARTHA ANGUS

DESIGNER AT HOME Having studied art at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and holding a degree in painting from Carnegie Mellon, Martha Angus distinguishes her career with one simple point: "I am passionate about art. I believe it is the most important element in a room, next to the people." That's why serious art collectors gravitate Martha's way when seeking a designer. But don't get her wrong. "Of course I consider furniture—of a certain level—art." What, if not art, is the gift face on her 18th-century rococo mirror frame (*below left*)? Or her prized antique Portuguese water jar (*middle*)? Or her own timeless Pucci shirt, worn for a photo (*below*) with son Malcolm, 15?





A sidewalk-sale tree's sinewy root bears the same flowing grace as the fine marquetrie of the Dutch rococo mahogany table on which it is displayed—a testament to Martha's honed eye for connections.

Right: The 18th-century table and inexpensive tree, doubled by a German gilt-framed rococo mirror, create transition to the dining area along with a Joan Mitchell painting.



them a pale cream. I also painted the walls pale cream and covered all the windows in the same color of draperies. I wanted to create a shell so the antiques and art would stand out.”

Stand out, indeed. Every room includes pieces of such inherent interest, so daringly displayed and to such mutual advantage, that the Golden Gate is no longer the obvious first focal point. With the apartment decorated Martha-style, it’s pieces like the Roy Lichtenstein woodcut floating down the living room’s mirrored wall that now snap heads to attention. Lichtenstein’s cartoonish take on an interior hangs inches above a creamy nubuck Deco-style sofa. The artwork’s display is an eye-catcher, but that’s just a starting point. Martha’s special talent lies in

mixing the graphically modern with the elegantly antique in one tight grouping: Joining the Lichtenstein-Deco ensemble are a pair of painted and gilt-trimmed neoclassical Italian chairs, upholstered in subtle, signature Fortuny.

On the opposite side of the sofa, over an open, charcoal-color coffee table that Martha designed herself to give the apartment both air and ground, a pair of 18th-century Swedish armchairs flank a small marble-topped bronze table from the 1930s. Steer up and to the left of one of the gilded Gustavian chairs, however, and you fast-forward three centuries to an oil painting by American artist Joan Mitchell. The tumble of blues and greens in Mitchell’s 20th-century work isn’t far off the mark from the

rhythm expressed in the stunning mid-18th-century German rococo gilt mirror that Martha wisely displays just next door—no more than 24 inches down the wall. A Dutch rococo table stands in front of the elaborate mirror, but don't let that repetition of style (if not country of origin) deceive you into believing Martha falls prey to any pattern of consistency. On the table, she displays a gilded fiberglass tree she couldn't resist for \$50 at a sidewalk sale several years ago. "It's all about the dialogue between the pieces—it has nothing to do with price or provenance," she insists. "Some things are just good neighbors."

A 1987 Christo collage suspended over the mirrored wall in the dining room, for example, keeps good company with an old tole-and-wood chandelier and painted Italian chairs from the Paris flea market. "When we married, we agreed that instead of buying each other sweaters or some tacky present for our anniversaries, we would purchase art together. We've been doing that for 20 years." Martha still aspires to a higher level of collecting. "I would love to get to the next level with more major-league paintings." Until then? There's always the bridge. ■

For more information, see sources on page 244.





A pair of gilt-accented columns add architectural interest to the bedroom. The chalky-green armoire is from Provence; the chairs are Italian. Opposite top: The painting, in the style of Fernand Léger, was one of Martha's assignments as an art student in Paris. Bottom: A painting by Cleo Fonseca hangs above the bed Martha designed. A David Hockney print rests on a French chest.