



INTERIOR DESIGN / NICOLE HOLLIS, NICOLEHOLLIS
ARCHITECTURE / BROOKS WALKER, WALKER WARNER ARCHITECTS
HOME BUILDER / GLEN SHERMAN AND YUN-JU CHO, VAN ACKER CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATES



BRAVE NEW WORLD

A PACIFIC HEIGHTS APARTMENT IS REINVIGORATED WITH RICH TEXTURES,
ARTISAN-MADE TOUCHES AND A SINGULAR ART COLLECTION THAT MIX
BOLDLY AGAINST ITS GRAPHIC HIGH-CONTRAST PALETTE.

WRITTEN BY LAURA MAUK / PHOTOGRAPHY BY LAURE JOLIET



I love California for its innovation,” says designer Nicole Hollis, who recently devised the dramatic interiors of a family’s Pacific Heights co-op apartment that spans an entire floor in a classic 1920s building. “I came from New York, and my clients moved from Hong Kong. I feel like people who end up here are risk-takers.”

The clients, a husband and wife who work in business and have a teenage son, relocated to Northern California to be closer to family. With a tight schedule, they called on Hollis to reimagine their new residence. “The building is a prewar structure that overlooks the Bay,” says the wife, noting that the city’s proximity to the water reminds them of their Hong Kong roots. “You can see Alcatraz and the Golden Gate Bridge.”

Architect Brooks Walker helped Hollis perfect the apartment’s interior shell. “There wasn’t a lot of structural work that needed to be done,” Walker says, “but the kitchen

and the master bath did get a down-to-the-studs makeover.” The architect remedied the kitchen’s choppy layout by removing an angled wall and reorganizing the placement of some of the appliances so that the space had better flow. Hollis then designed new cabinetry and created a cozy banquette area, which features a view of Coit Tower. “In the master bath, we moved the tub beneath a bay window and added square footage to accommodate symmetrically opposed vanities,” explains Walker, who also made a stronger connection between the living room and study by creating a large opening complete with pocket doors.

Glen Sherman, senior project manager and general manager of Van Acker Construction Associates, and project manager Yun-Ju Cho were the master builders who collaborated closely with Hollis to carry out the makeover, which included maintaining and restoring the structure’s original millwork and trim. “We breathed life into the place and honored what was once there,” Sherman says.

Opposite: Designer Nicole Hollis infused a Pacific Heights apartment with dramatic style, as in the entry, where she suspended the owners’ Louis Poulsen PH Artichoke pendant above a table from Atelier Gary Lee in Chicago. *Square Word Calligraphy: After Apple-Picking, 2003, by Xu Bing, hangs on the wall.*

Below: *Secretive Three Graces, 2008, by Debbie Han, and an Eero Saarinen-designed table from Knoll define the study. A Gino Sarfatti light fixture from Flos, part of the owners’ collection, suspends in the room, which Hollis painted with Pitch Black by Farrow & Ball. *Artificial Rock #146, 2011, by Zhan Wang, stands just outside the space.**





Above: A curated collection of books, which is displayed on the owners' existing coffee table, lends interest to the living room and is shown alongside a turned-wood bowl by Phillip Mouthrop.

Left: Hollis layered textures in the living room, where a velvet-upholstered sofa pairs with leather armchairs, all by Christian Liaigre and purchased from De Sousa Hughes. The floor lamp is from Blackman Cruz in Los Angeles, and the side table is by Troscan Design + Furnishings. A lush Moroccan rug from Tony Kitz Gallery grounds the space.



Hollis, working with her firm's residential studio director, Adele Dalby, outfitted the interior with the same complex layering of stark white tones, moody grays and rich shades of black and bronze you'd find in an iconic black-and-white photograph. "I like to work with high contrast and a more neutral palette because you get so much color from the art, accessories and landscape," Hollis says. "With the wide views of the Bay, the light has many moods throughout the day." The designer chose a creamy white paint for the walls of practically the entire apartment and offset them by staining the wood floors a deep chocolate brown. To create a dramatic counterpoint, she coated the study with Farrow & Ball's Pitch Black. "My work is not founded in decoration or tradition," says Hollis. "I like things that are riskier and edgier."

Hollis also prefers to layer as much texture as possible and add sculptural light fixtures. "It's like buying a classic suit and just adding a great watch or a great pair of shoes," she says. In the dining room, a large bronze chandelier with a sea urchin-like form is suspended above a massive custom oak table with a bronze base. "I used chunky linen draperies and placed a soft, shaggy Moroccan rug in

the living room," says the designer, who also covered an ottoman with hair-on-hide and chose a sofa upholstered with a shimmery velvet. Hand-blown glass sconces by John Pomp Studios appear as idiosyncratic globes that give the room an understated glow. "I never want to do sconces with shades just because that's the default or traditional answer," she says. "I prefer to seek out artists who create something thoughtful and one-of-a-kind."

The designer created a personal layer by expertly weaving in a selection of the clients' own items—pieces they had picked up on travels or had lived with for years. "Each existing furnishing they brought with them meant something and was so different," Hollis says of pieces such as woven baskets the couple purchased while traveling in Bhutan and a painted stool that the wife's sister brought back from Morocco. "I worked them in, and they ended up adding so much warmth." Perhaps the most sentimental item Hollis integrated is the rocker in the master bedroom. "We commissioned an artist in Virginia to carve the chair when my son was born," the wife says. "There's an inscription on the bottom."

Robert Rauschenberg's *Japanese Sky I* (from the *Bleacher* series) hangs near a Hollis-designed oak-and-bronze table in the dining space. The Lumiere light fixture by Jean de Merry adds a dynamic note. Dark-hued draperies, made with Christian Liaigre linen from De Sousa Hughes, frame sweeping views of the city.

In the living room, John Pomp Studios sconces from De Sousa Hughes flank a work by Antony Gormley. Hollis custom-designed the dramatic fireplace surround, which features Nero Marquina black marble with white veining, and worked with Van Acker Construction Associates on restoring the existing millwork. The owners purchased the baskets on a trip to Bhutan.



Hollis designed a banquette for the kitchen's casual breakfast area. Seating upholstered with material by Garrett Leather is both comfortable and low-maintenance. A custom wood table provides warmth, while a honeycomb-like glass pendant from Tim Clarke Interior Design in Santa Monica creates interest. The side chairs are from Dzine.



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Above: Hollis created a minimalist aesthetic for the kitchen. The designer chose Waterworks subway tile for the backsplash and Farrow & Ball's Pitch Black paint for the cabinetry, which she designed and had IK Design fabricate. Omnistone Masonry installed the Calacatta Gold countertops.

Left: A Le Creuset cup and saucer rest on the custom breakfast table.



Hollis' preference for neutrals, texture and form over color and pattern and the way that predilection thoughtfully accommodates the couple's enviable art collection might be the pinnacle of the project. "They take calculated risks in terms of art," the designer says. "They're intellectual about their choices and have renowned artists, but also a lot of contemporary and emerging names. Each work tells a story." A photographic work by Robert Rauschenberg looks almost like a third window in the dining room, while a large metallic sculpture by Zhan Wang has a stately, unencumbered appearance in the living room. A work by artist Xu Bing—a poem by Robert Frost drawn to look like Chinese characters—hangs in the minimalist entry. "It speaks to our Asian heritage," the wife says. "Our home is very calm. The art is showcased, but it doesn't float in rooms as if it's the only focal point. Everything here is in great harmony." ■



Left: The designer outfitted the master bathroom with Calacatta Gold marble for the floors and used the material again to customize a Restoration Hardware vanity. Roll & Hill sconces from Propeller and a geometric pendant by Tom Dixon from Matter in New York strike an industrial note.

Opposite: In the master bedroom, pale-hued bedding and Romo drapery fabric provide a subdued backdrop for the Liu Wei oil-on-wood artworks, which intentionally crack and change color over time. The owners commissioned the rocking chair from an artist in Virginia.