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ABOVE: Mary Schulte, seated, surrounded by her design team—Jill Rice of Jill Rice Design, and Rick McDermott and Matthew Lero from RDM Architecture. **LEFT:** In the living room, a pair of Tom Corbin sculptures flank a Michael Krueger lithograph above the mantel.

OPEN HOUSE

Architect Rick McDermott and designer Jill Rice breathe new life into a dated midcentury rambler to create an open-concept contemporary retreat for a Mission Hills couple

By contributing writer Charles Ferruzza

Photographed by Aaron Leimkuehler



ABOVE: The tufted, custom-built banquette is upholstered in a dark leather and topped with pillows in a Scalamandre fabric. The hexagonal Kravet stools can be easily moved to accommodate seating. **LEFT:** Two matching consoles flank the entrance to the living room. The double-doored entry foyer. Ceiling fixture is by Global Views.

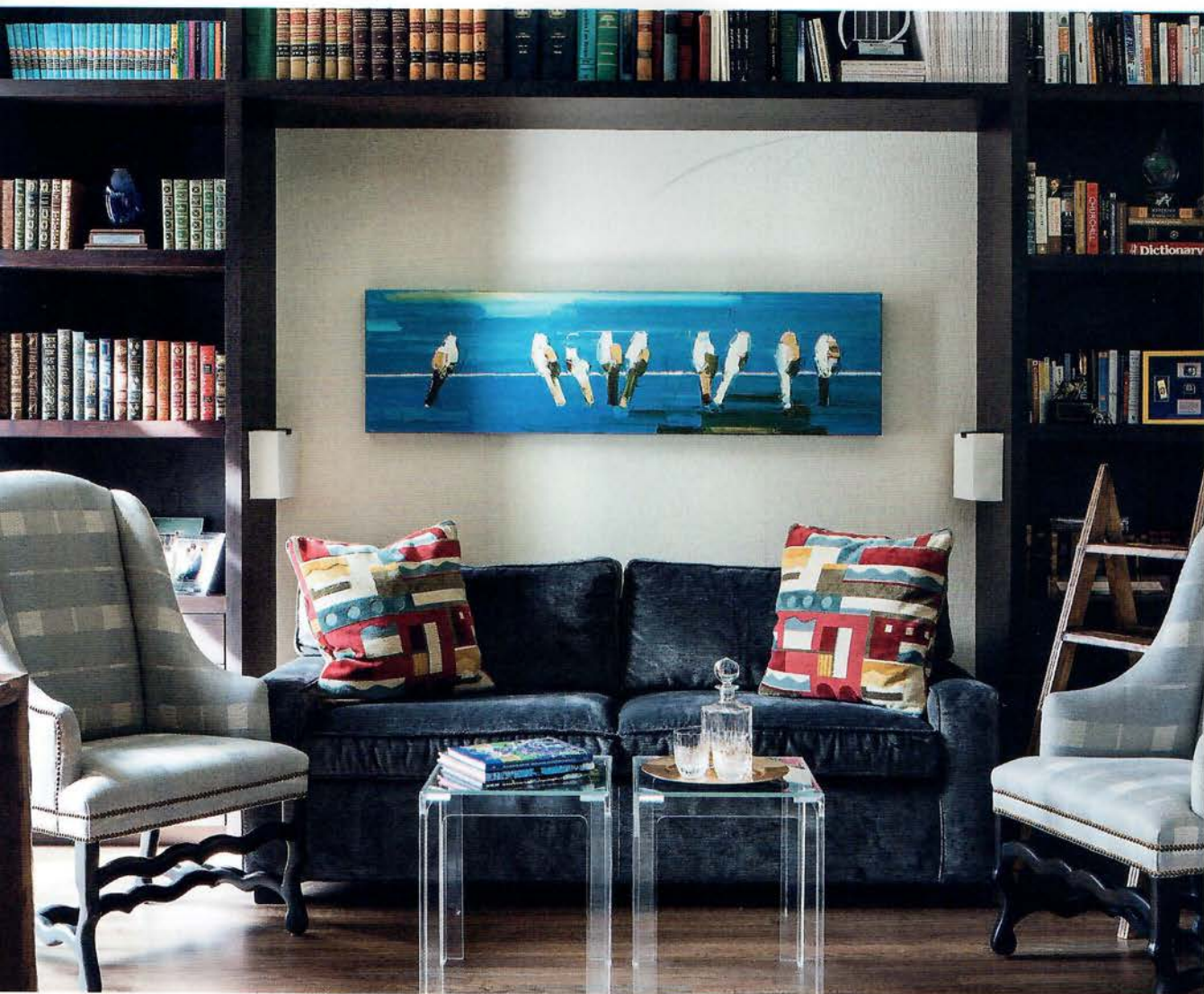


There are footprints—and there are footprints. The former can be left behind by chickens, quadrupeds, and prehistoric forms. The latter is man-made. In architectural terms, the entire area is covered by a permissible structure.

There are stringent rules in the suburb of Mission Hills for a house exceeding the size of an existing permit, particularly a home built nearly a half-century ago. It must not overstep its print, as it were.

That was the challenge for homeowners Mary and David who fell in love with a truly unique ranch-style home designed by Morton Payne that was the *ne plus ultra* of modern living. It had survived, with few preceding owners, almost remarkably intact its original footprint.

The Schultes liked the footprint. They were less entranced



in the library, a Lisa Lala painting hangs above the sofa from Gold + Bob Williams. Sconces are by Tech Lighting. **RIGHT:** In front of a large window at the end of a hallway leading to the bedroom, an antique Boddhisattva statue that Rice and Schulte found at Mission Road Antique Mall holds pride of place.

for dynamics of the stylishly '60s-modern home. After all, they were ready to downsize from a much larger home that had been unsuitable when their blended family of five children were all in college. Now that the youngest is off to college, Mary started looking for something smaller and easier to manage. The U-shaped house with its distinct living areas fit the bill.

Architect Rick McDermott and his staff at RDM Architecture joined the Schultes' design team (which included Hurst Construction and Rice Design) to create a fresh new image for a dated 20th-century rambling one-story with a full basement.

"The previous home was a great place for raising our family," David Schulte says. "It had lots of bedrooms, a rec room, a movie theater. This house is for us."

"It's a great house for entertaining," David Schulte says. "There's a wonderful flow now that the house is no longer in its original incarnation."





ABOVE: Two of the Schulte's dogs, Chloe and Henry, pose on the far room sofa. The large-format photograph is by Mike Sinclair. **LEFT:** A seating area by the wet bar. The walls are papered with a three-dimensional Maya Romanoff wallcovering that mimics tile. **OPPOSITE:** Cherry wood wrap the dining room in the custom de Gournay wallcovering.



"This house had fantastic bones," says Mary Schulte. "We saw the potential right away."

McDermott chose to expand a jumble of dimly lit, peccan-eled smaller rooms (kitchen, bath, bar, den, breakfast room) into a fluid living area that launched out from a dazzlingly up-to-date kitchen—moved closer to the formal dining room from its original location at the back of the house—and into a comfortable living room facing an original fireplace now faced with polished blue limestone.

“This house had fantastic bones. We saw the potential right away.”

Glass doors on various points of the interior U-shape slide open.





to permit the couple's dogs to scramble outside and dash around the perimeter of a gorgeous infinity-edge pool that seems to hover over the backyard like a glistening jewel.

Overseeing this renovation project became Mary Schulte's full-time job during the year of construction and redesign. "My wife knew

what she wanted," David Schulte says. "I trusted her on this project."

The lines of the Schulte home may seem deceptively

simple, but elegant touches abound, including gleaming, marble-tiled his-and-her bathrooms on each side of a luxurious, Asian-inspired master bedroom with ingeniously designed built-in hidden cabinets for re-charging phones, etc., instead of conventional nightstands.

“It was a way to honor the spirit of the house as it once was.”

If the kitchen and outdoor patio are, as David Schulte says, “the heart of the home,” the dining room is the soul of the home. This sophisticated room, dominated by custom-made hand-painted wallpaper with graceful branches of vivid cherry blossoms on a background of subtle silver.

When previous owners lived in the home, this dining room's most assertive feature was a formal crystal chandelier. That was replaced by two more modern fixtures that very much recall the sensibility of the 1960s, with bold crystal prisms that are so theatrical that they provide a perfect contrast to the more romantic wallcovering.

“It was a way to honor the spirit of the house as it once was,” says Mary Schulte.

The long, modern dining room table shares the space with an unexpected, but equally lengthy piece of furniture: a bench inspired by a 19th-century French schoolhouse, with each student's proper



ITE: Asian
s define the
bedroom.
WISE FROM
: The master
luxuriously
Calacatta
A barrel-
Japanese
tub domi-
ne guest bath-
The powder
channels the
opera House
e custom-
ceiling.



Sources

ARCHITECTURE
RDM Architecture
rdmarchitecture.com

INTERIOR DESIGN
Jill Rice Design
jillricedesign.com

indicated by incised Roman numerals.

A more formal living room is just adjacent to the dining room, with comfortable sofas and chairs (among the few pieces that the Schultes brought from their other home) and a high-backed banquette that wraps around two walls. Five shallow niches above the banquette are each fitted with acrylic boxes containing medallion-like gold metallic flowers created by North Carolina-based artist Tommy Mitchell. "When we bought the house, I wanted those niches, although I wasn't sure what I wanted to put in them," Mary Schulte says. "Dave would tease me by putting these acrylic sales trophies in them. But Jill Rice found these Mitchell pieces and they're fantastic."

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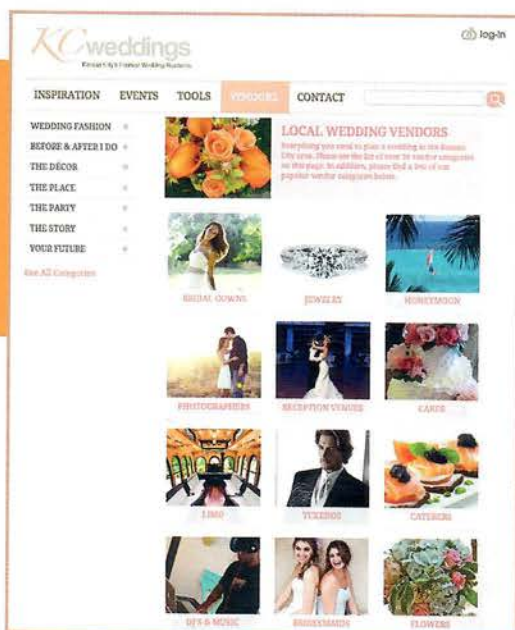


OPEN HOUSE



Across the hall, a former closet was reborn as a black-and-gold bathroom, with a gold-leafed domed ceiling—this *salon de bain* was inspired by a visit to France. Schultes, who shipped all of the French Provincial furniture from their previous home to their vacation home in Colorado, had to have at least one room unabashedly Gallic. This is it.

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ary and Dan Schulte insist this is their house. "We'll go out feet first," she laughs. "We're leaving. We put so much care into it, so much time and love that I knew this would be my forever home. And it is!" ♦

: The renovated exterior of the Mission home. **BELOW:** In the backyard, an infinity pool makes a grand statement.



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