

THE GENTRY Home



ALL ABOUT DRAMA

World-renowned interior designer Michael Booth of San Francisco's BAMO breathes new life into a historic Old Palo Alto estate.

Photography by Matthew Millman

Over the years, this lovely Spanish-style home on a quiet Palo Alto street had been compromised by poorly planned additions. With the goal of returning the house to its original elegance, Michael Booth, a Founder and Principal of San Francisco interiors firm BAMO, embarked on a complete renovation that returned to the property a sense of style reminiscent of a grand Montecito estate. Booth, whose client list reads like a who's who of San Francisco's most prominent families, had a distinct vision for this

project. "I wanted to fill it with light and vibrancy befitting a dynamic young family," recalls the designer. Booth and his team at BAMO designed the home across the street from this residence—a property with "an extremely modern, streamlined aesthetic," Booth notes. "It was a delight to then approach this home in a manner completely distinct from that, to design it in a classic style."

That style came with a top-to-bottom remodel, as Booth tackled everything from the home's exterior and landscaping to its interior architecture and furnishings. "We began by repainting the exterior in a fresh Santa Barbara white. We added windows, replaced missing shutters, even the gutters were restored," says the designer.

The desire to infuse the entire house with natural light inspired changes that helped reinforce the original architecture. In the foyer, a solid entry door was replaced by a glass door with decorative iron grill and flanked by new, oversized glass windows. A window was added atop the stairs, while other second-story windows were enlarged. "As the first introduction to the house, the foyer furnishings reference classic Spanish design," says Booth. "They lend an Old World quality without being heavy." Key pieces include a gorgeous ebonized walnut console from JF Chen and a rope urn by Parisian designer Christian Astuguevieille.

There is an air of formality in the three front rooms of the home—the foyer, living room and dining room—but Booth ensured that they were also comfortable and welcoming.

Because the house is disparate in its architecture from room to room, he unified the spaces by selecting the same trim color and wood floor throughout.



46 GENTRY HOME | AUTUMN 2012



Anchoring the floor in the foyer (opposite) is an antique Karabaugh from Stark. The Portuguese walnut console from JF Chen adds drama, while a pair of benches from Gregorius Pineo provides balance. A tranquil courtyard (this page) greets guests as they enter the home. Interior designer Michael Booth replaced the home's original front door with a custom glass and wrought-iron door to add light to the entry.



In the living room, Booth began by replacing an ill-proportioned "Colonial" millwork surround with an 18th-century French limestone mantle. Balancing the hearth on either side are antique mirrors hung above a pair of pedestal tables. Arrayed in front of this elegant vignette are two seating areas, featuring a Rose Tarlow sofa upholstered in a custom James Gould silk-and-linen fabric, as well as seating by Mariette Himes Gomez and John Saladino. Because illumination was an issue—the room gets no direct sun and is adjacent to a shade garden—Booth chose light, airy hues and gave the eclectic furnishings cohesion with a monochromatic color scheme.

A palette of burnt orange and red paired with rich wood furnishings demarcates the dining room from the rest of

The glamorous dining room (opposite) centers on a dining table by Dennis & Leen surrounded by gracious Michael Taylor armchairs. A custom table by Shilling & Assoc., surrounded by arm and side chairs by Formations, offers a cozy dining option in the kitchen (left). The kitchen chairs are upholstered in a combination of Bergamo and Rogers & Goffigan fabrics. A dramatic 18th-century limestone fireplace with trumeau from Cavendish Grey draws the eye in the living room (below). Rose Tarlow's Othello sofa upholstered in a James Gould custom silk and linen plaid is surrounded by a variety of chairs by Dessin Fournir, Mariette Himes Gomez, and John Saladino.





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the house and creates a mood that is dark and sexy. A sense of texture abounds: the walls feature hand-troweled plaster, the window coverings pair matchstick shades with linen drapery panels in raw umber, and Fortuny fabric and brass nail heads add interest to the backs of leather dining chairs. The centerpiece of the room, however, is the ceiling. Reminiscent of a Spanish hacienda, it features rich panels of reclaimed oak from which a Venini hand-blown glass chandelier is suspended.

The kitchen and breakfast areas are comfortable gathering places with Old World charm. "The owners knew that the kitchen would be the center of the home," says Booth. Achieving that would require both a stylistic and functional refresh. "When the home was originally built, the kitchen and breakfast spaces were actually an outdoor courtyard," he notes. "Former owners had filled it in and built a kitchen with a glass-block skylight, which created a grey, dreary light." Booth set about restoring the heart of the home by removing the skylight and heavy cabinetry and reimagining the layout. The existing kitchen island was enlarged, allowing for a

A trio of trestle-foot counter stools from William Switzer cozies up to a vast kitchen island (above), which is topped by a large pot rack from Aris Morris NYC. The master bedroom (opposite) is an oasis of calm. A folding panel by J.F. Fitzgerald is wrapped in a Rogers & Goffigon cream and gold stripe. The draperies and bedskirts were designed and fabricated by Martin Kobus. At the end of the bed, Booth placed a woven leather bench by Jeup Furniture.

family gathering place and providing a better work surface for preparing meals. Above it, a custom-designed pot rack places cooking accoutrements within arm's reach. "Now," says Booth, "the family really lives in the kitchen and family room." The kitchen table and chairs continue the Spanish-inspired, California Colonial look.

Upstairs, in the master bedroom and office, Booth maintained a serene atmosphere. The bedroom is enveloped in understated gold and cream hues. Highlights include a custom, six-panel folding screen wrapped in Rogers & Goffigon fabric, a custom headboard made by J.F. Fitzgerald, and custom drapery.

The office was formerly a sunroom, but had poor proportions, and a previous owner had added large storage closets, which made the space long, skinny, and unusable. Booth took out the wall and opened up the room, transforming it into a wonderful conduit of natural light that illuminated the top of the stairs as well.

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