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A NEW OUTLOOK ON EVERYDAY LIVING

A renovation in Noe Valley
by Yama Mar Design
captures the view, p. 118.

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EDWARDIAN REVIVAL

A few deft moves from a young architectural duo turned a cramped Edwardian in the city into an orderly and spacious family home.

BY DEBORAH BISHOP
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRUCE DAMONTE



Due to historic preservation codes, this house renovated by Yama Mar Design looks no different than its neighbors from the front (right), but the rear facade (below) reveals how all of the rooms, including the living/dining area, have been opened up to the sweeping views of the city.



Karen Mar and David Yama (pictured below) softened the sleek new kitchen with red elm casework and a solid plank from a Sonoma gum tree for the bar counter. A transom window pulls in light from the "chill room" (formerly the dining room).



From the street, Eric and Linda Eislund's home appears to be just another charming Edwardian-era house, one of many Noe Valley residences built by architect-carpenter John Anderson at the turn of the century. In compliance with historic preservation codes, from the front this newly renovated house is barely distinguishable from its neighbors, save for an understated oak front door.

To appreciate the aesthetic time warp embodied by the 105-year-old house, one needs to go around the back. Sandwiched between two clapboard A-frames whose rear dormer windows resemble hooded eyes, the transparent back wall of the Eislunds' house glows, as if liberated from the burden of towing the historic line.

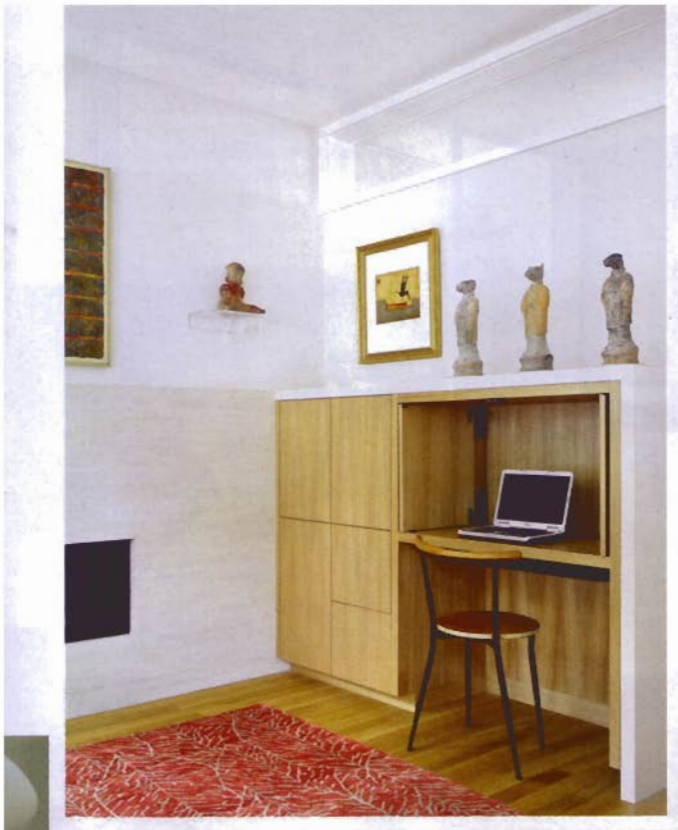
In 1990, when entertainment producer Eric Eislund returned to the Bay Area after working in Amsterdam, the house met his desire for a solid place to live, in a nice neighborhood, at a reasonable price. The small, closed-in rooms and truncated views were of secondary concern, and the illegal downstairs unit served as an office. Four years later, Eric

met his wife, Linda, a clinical psychologist, and the family grew to include sons Seth and Drew (who are now ten and seven, respectively), and two leggy English setters named Jake and Sadie. Craving a radical makeover that would harness more usable space while capturing the impressive vistas out back, the Eislunds selected architects David Yama and Karen Mar of Yama Mar Design, who worked together at Pfau Architecture before establishing their own office four years ago.

Conferring with the Eislunds amid a pastiche of arched doorways, wooden beams,

The Eislunds' art collection, including Tom Seghi's *Fruit* in the living room (below) and Mark Thompson's abstract painting in the dining area (right), is best appreciated on foggy days when the views disappear.





LEFT: The "chill room" at the front of the house has a computer nook that can be closed away. BELOW: Eric's office is a few steps above the family room; from his desk, Dad can keep an eye on his adventurous sons.

ceiling rosettes, spindle staircase railings and chandeliers, the architects initially suggested subtle alterations that might act as a bridge to the house's Edwardian heritage. "But not for long," says Yama, laughing. "They made it clear they wanted something extremely clean and modern, and they were willing—no, eager—to 'obliterate' the house to get it."

Not only did the Eislunds crave a less cluttered approach to living, with more built-in storage and fewer decorative distractions, they sought a more neutral backdrop for their extensive and eclectic art collection, ranging from contemporary paintings and sculptures to Chinese artifacts such as Song Dynasty tea bowls and a series of Tang horses.

The architects transformed the cramped two-bedroom, 2-1/2 bath house into a four-bedroom, 3-1/2 bath home by adding a mere 313 square feet (the house is now just shy of 3,000 square feet). On the garden level, a guest bedroom-cum-office for Eric overlooks the family room. Upstairs, they freed up the back of the main floor for a living/dining area by moving the kitchen to the other side of the hallway.

On the third level, Seth and Drew used to share a large room at the back of the





ABOVE: Surfacedesign created Cor-Ten and concrete walls that form a path to the garden. RIGHT: "The stone wall keeps the wine cool naturally and looks very organic, like a cave," says Yama of the wine closet.

and Mar grew to love the colors and striations of the exposed foundation wall, and sought a way to integrate it, "but not in a precious way—with a purpose," says Mar. They decided to incorporate it into a wine cellar, walling it off with a set of hinged glass doors.

The backyard also retains relics of the site's past. Cor-Ten planter boxes and concrete walls were added to existing stone retaining walls to create a series of switchbacks that guide the journey into the garden, where there is a decomposed granite terrace for entertaining and a lower lawn for play. Viewed from the decks above, the rise and fall of the garden walls offer an abstract interpretation of the hilly city itself.

Interestingly, even while adding more space, the renovation has had the happy result of bringing the family closer. "The boys used to hang out in their bedroom, because there was nowhere else to put their toys and games," says Linda. Now, the family tends to congregate on the main floor, with the kids working on a project in the new "chill room," while Eric and Linda are in the kitchen or living room. "We love the new feeling of togetherness." ■

