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DESIGNER SECRETS

An inside look at divine digs by 13 designers

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theatrical



Geoff De Sousa San Francisco Showhouse San Francisco, California

Wild horses wouldn't have dragged designer Geoff De Sousa and his assistant, Sarah Puls, from this challenging project, but the pair did draw inspiration from the steeds. The design duo transformed the ballroom of a grand 1890s San Francisco manse into an elegant living room for a modern-day family. Using a mix of opulent textiles, antiques, contemporary furnishings, and an eye-catching reverse-glass painting of galloping horses, they created a luxurious space that's comfortable for both everyday living and formal entertaining.

The handsome palette features an unusual combination of navy blue and rust, selected to give warmth to the north-facing room. The dark scheme mellows the architecture of what Geoff says was formerly "one hard, white box." Paper-backed silk fabric and heavy cornices applied to the walls also soften the room, as does crown molding painted a coordinating shade of navy that marries the walls to the ceiling. Three sets of French doors soaring close to ceiling height provide the perfect showcase for elaborate window dressings—pinch-pleated panels of wool appliquéd in velvet and blanket-stitched in cream—that ▶



hang from cornices designed to mimic original woodwork. To make the preexisting tall mirrors on the French-door wall look aged, a decorative artist gave them a gold-bronze rub.

Because the onetime ballroom has generous square footage, the designers broke the space into two intimate areas by placing a modern hammered metal library table in the middle to set parameters. Against the wall of French doors, a sofa in rust-colored mohair anchors a formal grouping that includes symmetrical pairs of bentwood chairs, tufted black-vinyl chairs, faux-bamboo side tables, and table lamps with leather-wrapped bases. At the opposite end of the room, the color scheme reverses in a more casual setting which features a blue sofa, mismatched leather chairs, and a low bench where stacks of books reside. Matching modern chandeliers light and unite each area.

"The best way to build a room with personality is by mixing old with new to achieve a 'collected over time' appearance," says Geoff. "Many of the pieces I use in my rooms are not old, but they have mystery and a story to them." >

Produced by Heather Lobdell Photographs by James Carrière



Geoff De Sousa

Designer Geoff De Sousa approaches rooms as if they were sculpture gardens, featuring interesting shapes that work with the other players to create a dramatic look. "I prefer furnishings and accessories that are sculptural—with their own personalities so they can stand on their own."