



# THE IDEAL CANVAS

Jeff Schlarb creates a forward-looking home with roots in the past

The Curio Plume wallcovering by Cole & Son sets the style tone in the kitchen while Calacatta Vagli marble makes up the counter backsplash and waterfall edge on the island made of Neolith in Arctic White is the surface for the 12-foot island.

By MARY JO BOWLING  
Photos by AUBRIE PICK



An eye-catching wall sculpture by Megan Shimek hangs in the living room. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** In the dining room, a bright blue abstract painting, *Waiting for Manifestations* by Jennifer Damas, holds center stage.



**T**here are busy interior designers, and then there's Jeff Schlarb. The San Francisco-based designer has a project list that would make mere mortals blanch. In addition to being the founder and principal of Jeff Schlarb Design Studio, Schlarb runs Green Couch (a real estate staging company), produces a podcast featuring people who possess what he calls "design proclivity" and has just completed his fourth appearance in the San Francisco Decorator Showcase (an annual event that features the work of the region's top designers). In addition to all that, Schlarb regularly takes on personal development projects, and the way he does it is something of an art.

"There are a few ways of doing real estate development," Schlarb says. "You can complete a project quickly, and without much design thought—and this gets it on the market right away. You can do it at a somewhat higher level, maybe even getting an architect involved, and end up with something that's

more middle of the road. How we like to do it is to bring the same spirit and the same energy to a development project that we bring to any project, and we go the extra mile. We are in the business of making badass, amazing homes—whether it's for a client or for the real estate market—and that's what's always worked for me."

Case in point: A Cow Hollow home Schlarb recently completed. When he and his partners purchased it, it was an unremarkable multifamily home. Along with architect Stephen Sutro, Schlarb made it a single-family home endowed with what he calls "rad elegance"—that is, in the designer's words, a "revised version of classic design details, married to a seductive edge."

"The original house had a classic exterior and interior trim," says Schlarb. "Our idea was to leave some of those features, but to add modern elements onto the existing house, creating something like a modern mashup—the kind of thing you see in Europe."

The original house, which Schlarb describes as "small for its lot," grew significantly, from 2,800 square feet to 5,600. "We went wider, further back and taller," says Schlarb. "We expanded in every possible direction."

The result is a home whose front exterior façade has classic lines and dentil molding, but with large, contemporary windows. The rear exterior is more sleek, with modernist lines and a clearer view of the new penthouse room (dubbed the Sky Lounge). Inside, the modern mix continues with a monochromatic color scheme, marble slabs with a strong vein pattern, highly textured wallcoverings and the kind of exacting details that come from a designer who is willing to sweat them.

"We designed this house with the philosophy of 'Build it and they will come,'" says Schlarb. "We concentrated on high-end finishes and I worked hard to make all of the features—some so subtle that no one else might notice—perfect."

That means elements that may be unlike any you've seen before. In the kitchen, for instance, the surface of the island is composed of Neolith sintered stone and the sides are finished with marble slabs. In the living room, the linear fireplace required, according to Schlarb, "a ridiculous amount of work" (black marble covers surround and trim and fully lines the shelf). In a master bath that's blessed with a good amount of square footage, Schlarb painstakingly aligned the grout lines between the wall and floor tile so they match up perfectly and imported handmade CVL Luminaires light fixtures after spotting them in Paris. This is not to mention the small, uncommon details throughout—such as a stair rail with an angular, curving metal banister and windows with natural stone sills. "We are trying to create things that won't be dated in five or six years," says Schlarb. "I believe you do that by being unique."

If there's any doubt that this is not your regular development project,





consider this: The house was designed to accommodate an unseen art collection. “We knew that the buyers would likely have an art collection, so we installed lights that wash the walls and can be adjusted,” Schlarb says. In the meantime, the designer sourced a series of graphic works by artists including; Robert L. Larson, Lexygius Sanchez Calip, Jennifer Damas and a large, woven textile above the Sky Lounge sofa is blue braided fiber art by Meghan Bogden Shimek.

In a way, you could say Schlarb brought his own brand of creativity and passion to bear when designing the house. “When I meet people and make friends, I like them to have more than face value—I like to discover that people have hidden depths, talents and abilities,” he says. “I’d like to think people make similar discoveries in this house. This is not a place that’s all flash and no content. The exterior is attractive, but there are layers behind it.”



**OPPOSITE PAGE, ABOVE:** The master bath provides a spa-like experience. The light fixtures are by CVL Luminaires, Litz Luxe Gold fixtures are from Brizo.  
**BELOW:** The uppermost level is a window-lined lounge. A fiber artwork by Meghan Bogden Shimek adorns one wall.  
**THIS PAGE:** In the powder room, the bold black Seaphina wallpaper from Colefax and Fowler makes a statement.