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ART IN DESIGN

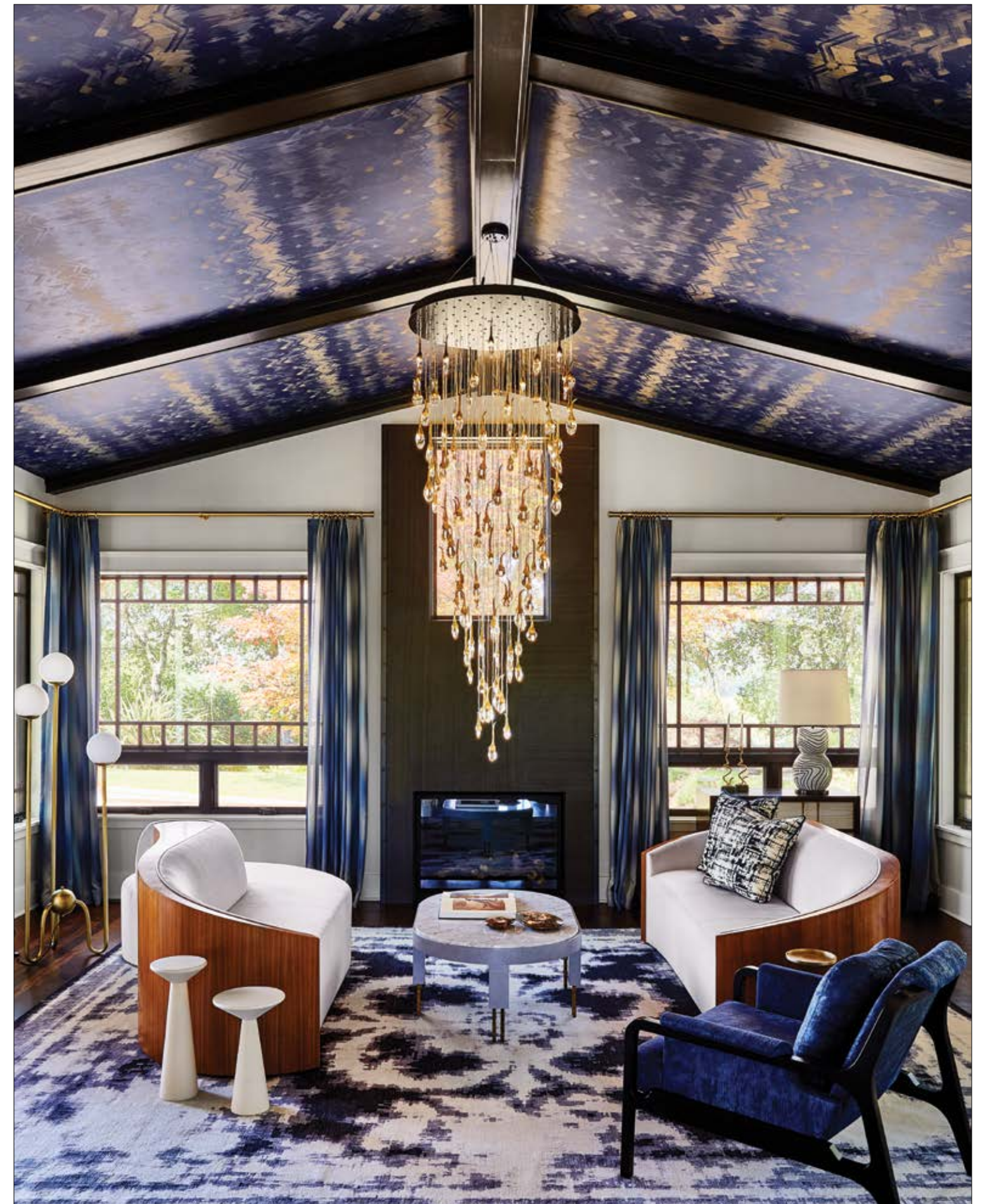


GO BIG, GO BOLD

INTERIOR DESIGN: JEFF SCHLARB

TEXT: ERIKA HEET

PHOTOGRAPHY: AUBRIE PICK





From designers to musicians, no one wants to be stuck in one genre. For Bay Area designer Jeff Schlarb, this concept informed the design of a getaway in Healdsburg—deep in Northern California's idyllic wine country—for Lawrence and Nicole Blatt. For Lawrence, a biotechnology entrepreneur, part time musician and philanthropist, and Nicole, a philanthropist and homemaker, the home's interiors needed to reflect a balance of styles as well as the couple's love of nature. "We like the modern/contemporary and midcentury aesthetic, but realized that our house had its architectural roots firmly in the Craftsman and Mission style movements," Blatt says of the home, designed by architect Mike Craigie. "The house is located on a beautiful piece of land in the Sonoma County Dry Creek valley with 360-degree views of oak and pine forests and vineyards. We asked Jeff to blend elements of nature and modern and postmodern aesthetics with transitional pieces that could anchor the house in its roots while maintaining an eye to the future."

"We were charged with making a creative space, one that reflected them," Schlarb says of the design directive from the clients. "We walked the San Francisco Design Center and created many of the decisions on the final pieces from those experiences. We actually were introduced to them by one of our favorite design showrooms, Coup D'Etat." From the wonderfully eclectic design gallery came the piece that would set an arty mood for the house, a sculpture by Kelly Farley made up of hanging orbs and chains that spill to the floor—an edgy room divider separating the entrance and dining room. A nod to nature is evident in the latter, which is swathed in green, from the Porter Teleo wallpaper to the Caste chairs in a mix of emerald fabrics from Jim Thompson and Rubelli to the green suit of the bather in a portrait by Patrick Duegaw. That green—and nature—continues in the guest bedroom's found botanical art pieces the couple brought to the house, and the leather of the Anthropology bed that, says Schlarb, "matches their cool vintage dresser perfectly."





More material layering is in effect in the living room, on axis with the entrance, whose ceiling recess gives a hint of what's to come. Between the pitched beams of the living room ceiling, blue Brushed Herringbone paper from New Wall commands attention and pulls in blues from the Atmosfera drapery fabric by Zoffany and the Bleu Misia jacquard on the lounge chair. The ceiling, notes Schlarb, "was a really nice balance between geometric and geographic patterns that we all fell in love with. It is a large-scale pattern that repeats but doesn't feel repetitive. It is simply perfect." A pair of Randolph & Hein sofas—one with a flowing curved back, one straight—brings the energy down to a restful refinement.

With so much electricity, there must come some grounding. Schlarb delivered with neutral pauses like the open kitchen, a space awash in white, where leather stools from McGuire evoke just a bit of elegant bondage. "At our studio, we think that there needs to be a place for the eyes to rest," Schlarb says. "A place for breath and a space for one to tackle big dreams and to fill that restful interior feeling with life's busy-ness. We specifically love a room to have an artistic moment that stops residents and guests alike and demands furniture investigation...like a fine art piece." A half turn reveals the family room, where a McGuire sectional covered in a Pierre Frey fabric joins a round mirror from Ben and Aja Blanc from the Future Perfect, and a metal Kimono chair with caramel-colored leather from Amura. Nearby is one of Blatt's many guitars, this one a gorgeous acoustic by revered luthier Kathy Wingert. "As with most houses, people tend to gravitate to the kitchen and family room areas," Blatt says. "The single-story California ranch style home, with its open floor plan enhanced by Jeff's design elements, perfectly accommodates our need for simplicity and comfort."

As Blatt's music defies genres, so does this home. The layering of styles, textiles and materials brings to mind the blending of instruments, tones and sounds in a song, which the creative couple appreciates. Nicole is especially taken by the combination of breathtaking views and modern comforts, while Lawrence relies on the natural beauty of Sonoma county to guide his guitar compositions, "written with inspiration from the unique landscape and the quiet respite provided by the home," he says. For Schlarb's part, the goal was fairly simple. "We all wanted them to have a sophisticated home in the country," he says. "And that is what they got." ■ *Jeff Schlarb, jeffschlarb.com*



