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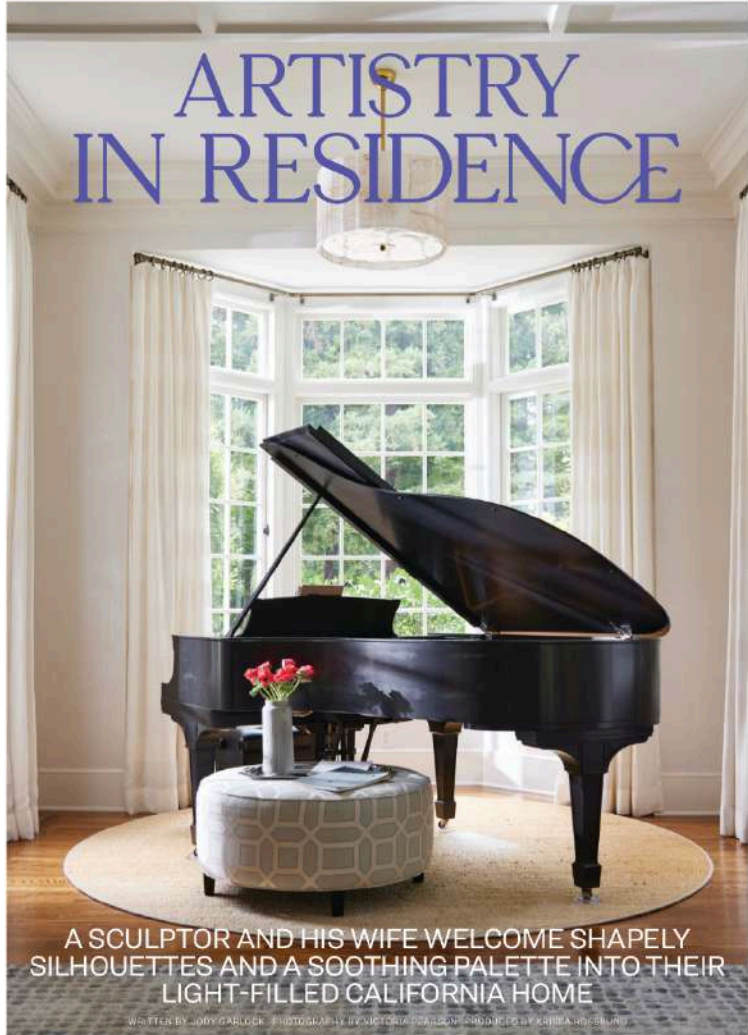
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SPRING 2025



ARTISTRY IN RESIDENCE

A SCULPTOR AND HIS WIFE WELCOME SHAPELY SILHOUETTES AND A SOOTHING PALETTE INTO THEIR LIGHT-FILLED CALIFORNIA HOME

WRITTEN BY JORDY CARLOCK PHOTOGRAPHY BY VICTORIA FOLKARD PRODUCTION BY KRISTA ROSSIGNOL





Artists have long been intrigued by natural light, some even considering it a necessity for creativity. Sculptor Richard Kopcho is no exception. When the former certified public accountant, who says he “stumbled” into sculpting while living in Europe, began house hunting in California’s San Mateo County, he was drawn to homes that could offer the magical and soothing quality that light affords. Although the house he and his wife, Darcy, ended up purchasing needed updates, they could see its potential. Abundant windows ushered in light, some of which was artfully filtered through the leafy redwoods and coast live oaks that thrived on the property.

“We bought the house as much for the lighting and the yard as anything else,” says Richard, whose creative expression extends to landscaping. “I was looking for a place that I knew would feel good for both of us.”

“The home’s feel-good quality was ultimately elevated after Darcy connected with interior designer Penny Drue Baird,

Portrait “It’s a 24/7 compulsion,” homeowner Richard Kopcho says of the clay portraits he sculpts in his studio. **Living room** Designer Penny Drue Baird divided the living room into two seating areas, each anchored by a tufted sofa. **Previous pages** A Steinway baby grand piano strikes an elegant silhouette in front of a bay window. Midcentury high-back wing chairs and a vintage coffee table offset the formality of the sofa and show the home’s modern-with-traditional mix.



THIS WAS A
MARRIAGE OF
CLASSIC ELEMENTS
TO FIT MODERN
LIVING.

—designer Penny Drue Baird



The white kitchen, which the previous owners had remodeled, offered the light and airy look the couple desired. Their primary upgrade was the addition of the French range, which complements the silvery-gray veining in the backsplash tiles and countertops. Brass knobs and handles bring a glam touch and visual warmth, contrasting the kitchen's other silver-tone metal finishes.



who is known for her elegant blend of modern and classic aesthetics. Darcy had purchased two of Baird's design books, and about a month later, she called Baird and said, "I'm wondering why my homes don't look like the ones in your books."

The collaboration that ensued between the Kopchos and Baird, which included a shared love of European culture and lifestyle, proved to be a perfect match. Baird helms her design firm from both New York City and Paris and is passionate about sourcing antique treasures from Paris flea markets to spark a sense of history, tradition, and character in the homes she designs. Richard lived in France as a boy, and the couple spent three years in French-speaking Geneva, Switzerland, during which time Richard took a stone-carving class in Italy. Buoyed by that, he began studying clay sculpting. "Stone is so slow, so I immediately started working in clay," Richard says. "You can make things in clay in a matter of days."

Unlike many of Baird's projects that involve renovations or touching a home's architecture, this one was cosmetic. The

Breakfast room A skylight floods the dining area of the breakfast room with natural light. Baird had to get creative to illuminate the space at night. She had a linear fixture custom-sized to the skylight area and electricity wired into the side. **Exterior** The Colonial Revival house exudes formality with pillars at the front entrance and a fountain in the circular drive yet has cottage-ease softness with carefree plantings. The backyard patio is the couple's pre-dinner relaxation spot among nature.



challenge for Baird was that the architectural features, such as thick crown moldings, tended to be more expected and ordinary than unique. "It was dependent on me to create interest through my decorating," Baird says. "I was relying heavily on the furnishings. So one trick was to make the furnishings themselves architectural features and statements."

Hence, pieces were chosen for their shapes and silhouettes—a mix that incorporates curvy and graceful with clean-lined and bold. In the dining room, a banquette follows the curve of a bay window while a bulbous metal base on the accompanying table stands out like a sculpture. Vintage Vladimir Kagan chairs that surround the main dining table are bold in their cube-shape simplicity and distinct midcentury style.

Dramatic light fixtures and rugs also were chosen for their statement-making looks. In the entry, a two-tone carpet drifts into sweeping curves before continuing up the stairs. "These dramatic strokes added architecture where there was none," Baird says of the flooring and lighting choices.

Dining room The doorway into the dining room frames an artsy view that includes a patchwork-look Abaca-weave wallcovering ("Océania" from Elitis). A banquette follows the curve in a bay window to create a secondary dining area or buffet at the glass-top table with a hammered bronze base. **Entry** An accent chair with pale blue fabric hints at the home's calming hues and sculptural shapes. The rug follows suit with a curvy inlaid portion creating a sense of movement.

The hunt for statement pieces was a group effort. On Parisian shopping trips, Baird was in her element as she guided the couple to markets around the city that has become her second home and where vendors know her by name. "I'm very enthusiastic—I'm like the mayor," Baird says of her antiquing tour-guiding. Although the Kopchos have enjoyed visiting Paris over the years, antiquing was a new experience, which they readily embraced. "We were excited to have her take us places we never thought of looking," Richard says.

That enthusiasm heightened as Baird deftly placed furnishings in rooms and hung rewired vintage light fixtures to add character and juxtaposition. One case in point is the oversize bronze-frame coffee table from the 1950s that contrasts a traditional tufted sofa in the living room. "It's old and soulful," Richard says of the table. "It has lots of attitude."

Adds Baird: "This was a marriage of traditional and classic elements to fit with the home, as well as to provide a vibe for today's living."

From a palette standpoint, Baird showed restraint to keep rooms bright and airy so as not to impede natural light. "It was a balance between having a bit of color and neutrals," Baird says. "When you have so many windows and so much greenery outside of those windows, the greenery comes into the room and you feel that in each space."



THE CLIENTS WANTED THE HOUSE
TO BE ELEGANT YET LIVABLE.
—Penny Drue Baird



Walls are either white or dressed in neutral-color textural wallcoverings that amp up interest without commanding too much attention—another design trick Baird employed to bring a sense of architecture and layering to spaces. In the breakfast room, the wallcovering creates thin, barely noticeable horizontal stripes. In a guest bedroom, an intriguing double-layer, open-weave paper forms a two-tone geometric pattern and allows the wall color to peek through, launching the room's spirited yet soothing monochromatic scheme.

The updates were an all-around win. Baird appreciates the couple giving her freedom to do her job, and the Kophos are savoring the result—one that Richard says seems uniquely like them. "We're wild about the look she created," he says. "It's eclectic. It has very old components and contemporary, new components—a great mix of old and new." Most importantly, Richard adds, "The home has a great feel now." ■

Interior design: Penny Drue Baird, Dasso

Primary suite Sheer fabrics dress windows to allow filtered light into the bathroom and bedroom; woven shades make the bedroom conducive for sleeping. **Guest bedroom** Golden tones bring an elegant sparkle to a guest bedroom. The open-weave wallcovering, the carpet, and the sofa's chenille fabric share a similar—and subtle—circular motif that further unifies the monochromatic scheme. The "Nomad" side chair from Artistic Frame plays into the geometry with its open oval back.