

3D

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INSIDE: INTERNATIONAL DESIGNERS GO ARTISANAL • THE FASHIONABLE ALLURE OF EXQUISITE FABRICS • ALCHEMY WITH ANTIQUES • TWO DREAM ROOMS BY CECILIA SAGRERA-HILL AND GEORGE BRAZIL • LEADING INTERIOR DESIGNERS AND THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: A RECIPROCAL LOVE OF FRESH IDEAS • DESIGNERS' FAVORITE HOTELS

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IN THE MIX



Alchemy with Antiques

A FRESH COMBINATION OF
OLD AND NEW GIVES A ROOM
DEPTH OF CHARACTER

BY KENDRA BOUTELL



The late Kalef Alaton explained how he used antiques in his interiors: “I might combine an old piece with something very modern, but I won’t know how it will look until the pieces are placed together. The concept of combining styles is similar to acquiring friends. It’s nice to have young friends and old friends, each unique.” Alaton, born in Turkey, was living in Los Angeles when he passed away in 1989 at the age of 49. He left behind a legacy of design that seamlessly combined the old with the new.

How are designers mixing antiques and vintage with modern in the current economic climate? For a 1930s Monterey Colonial designed by architect William Wurster, interior designer Geoffrey De Sousa chose to return the faded beauty to its original glamour. The entry hall sets the tone of the residence, with sable-colored grass cloth walls and a pewter-leafed papered ceiling, both from Phillip Jefferies. Centering the room is a dramatic mirrored table from the 1940s displaying a contemporary collection of imperial yellow Chinese ceramics. De Sousa says of the design concept, “We wanted to pay homage to each decade of the home’s life.”

Suzanne Tucker of Tucker & Marks believes adding antiques to a space gives it soul. She observes, “There don’t have to be a

- Top left: In the living room of the San Francisco Decorator Showcase, Suzanne Tucker juxtaposed the modern with the traditional. (Photo: Mathew Millman)
- Left: Geoffrey De Sousa mixes historical references in a contemporary setting, as evinced by this entry. (Photo: Jonn Coolidge)



• Left: Architectural photographer Tim Street-Porter captured the antique-accented San Francisco living room designed by Fisher Weisman. • Below: Paul Wiseman found the unique pair of Javanese Art Deco lanterns at the former Ed Hardy San Francisco. (Photo: Matthew Millman)



lot of antiques, and they don't all need to be the finest examples. The old patina of wood, painted finishes and metals give a lovely juxtaposition to what is new and can make a room so much more interesting and balanced. Every room benefits from something old in it." For the corner of the living room in a recent San Francisco Decorator Showcase, Tucker chose a neoclassical bureau plat, which she contrasted with a contemporary figurative sculpture by Manuel Neri. The custom neoclassic-style chair was upholstered in an art nouveau-influenced cut velvet from Clarence House.

Sometimes a designer uses an older piece as the inspiration for a room. Paul Vincent Wiseman and his firm, The Wiseman Group, found a pair of large Javanese Art Deco lanterns for the dining room of a home in Kona, Hawaii. The quadrilateral glass panes of the fixtures are echoed in the rectangular cutouts of the concrete dining table designed by The Wiseman Group. To accompany the table, the firm selected Orlando Diaz-Azcuy's Scala Dining Chair from McGuire. Wiseman and his team practice design alchemy, mixing antiques with custom designs, showroom pieces and an occasional retail item.

For another wise man, Jeffrey Weisman of Fisher Weisman, antiques are the jewelry of the room. Weisman and his partner, Andrew Fisher, are known for their imaginative but restrained interiors. Weisman comments on their design philosophy, "We don't tend to fill houses with loads of antiques; rather, we use them as anchors and accents in a room. Nothing adds character and

elegance to a home better than a fabulous antique." This is illustrated by the San Francisco living room the partners did in which a massive neoclassical chandelier is the focal point of the space that includes a tailored sofa and streamlined coffee table.

Gary Hutton, who designs interiors and furniture, studied fine art under Wayne Thiebaud, Robert Arneson and Manuel Neri. Hutton's designs are modernist with a touch of whimsy. For his own home, he added antiques and old pieces to create a visual diary. Hutton describes his collection, "I've traveled a bit and made sure that I bought something wonderful on each trip. I have a collection of lovely objects that remind me of a trip, a significant event or a unique friend." •

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Kendra Boutell has 25 years of experience selling, marketing and writing about investment-grade antiques, decorative arts and home furnishings. She is a contributing editor for California Homes magazine. Her previous articles can be found on her blog at www.porcelainsandpeacocks.com.