

HOME MADE



Michael Short / Special to The Chronicle

Jeannie Fraise made a special desk area for daughter Tulla, 7, in the dining room of the Mission District home where the family of four lives.

The family zone

The details

Who: Jeannie and Christophe Fraise, their son, Kai, 8, and daughter, Tulla, 7.

What: Renovated 1884 Victorian in the Mission District.

The plan: Three floors that total about 2,800 square feet — including two playrooms and a small office for Christophe on the lowest level; kitchen, powder room, dining room/family area and living room/Jean-nie's office on the main level; and three bedrooms and two baths on the top level.

The style: "Sophisticated, but playful and livable," says Jeannie Fraise.

By Anh-Minh Le

When it comes to living with color and pattern, Jeannie Fraise practices what she preaches. Lotus Bleu (www.lotusbleudesign.com), her Hayes Valley shop and interior design studio, is brimming with patterned textiles, as well as electric-hued furniture. A few miles away, the cheery aesthetic extends to Fraise's Mission District house.

"It makes me feel good and happy," she says of her kaleidoscopic tendencies. "And I think home spaces should do that."

Fraise and her husband, Christophe, purchased their 1884 Victorian about 14 years ago. "The house had been in a family for 60 years," she says. "They hadn't torn out the architectural details ... but they also hadn't updated it at all. It was in major disrepair, so needed everything from a new foundation to a new roof."

She continues: "It was a great skeleton — ready for us to start from scratch and make it into our own, long-term family home."



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Jeannie and Christophe Fraise, with their children Kai, 8 (left), and Tulla, 7, in the home they transformed from a traditional Victorian into a family-friendly abode.

Formal to kid-friendly

Jeannie Fraise has firsthand experience in taking a formal setting and revamping it to create a lively, modern and family-friendly interior.

Old is new: "We repainted or reupholstered so many pieces; they are ones that are either sentimental or ones with cool lines that are highlighted with the color we used. It was a great excuse to use all of the textiles that I love. I recommend Stitch (www.stitchsf.com) for upholstery projects."

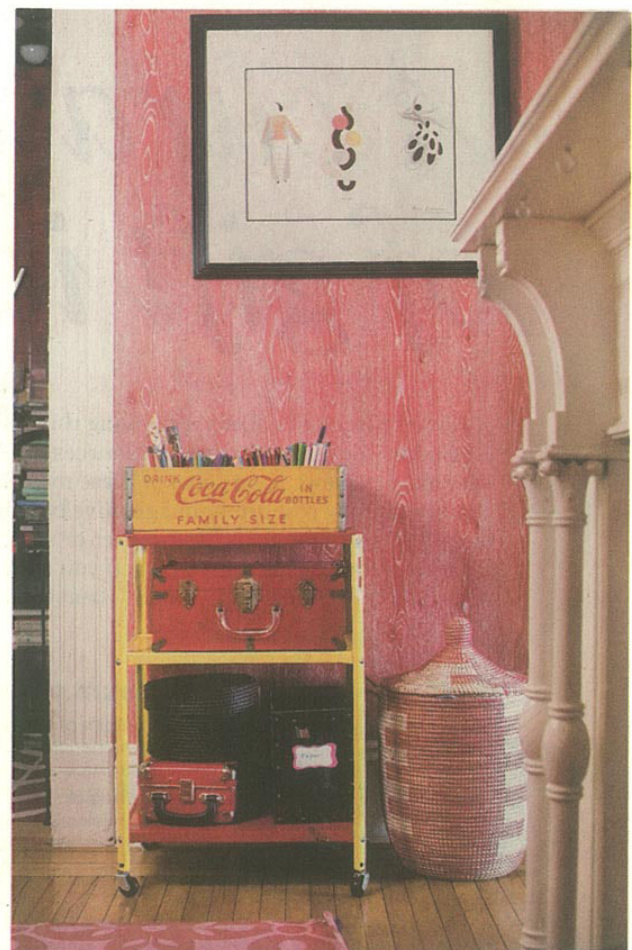
Clutter control: "Determine what you will use in each space in your house, as well as where it will go and how it will be organized. For example, in my living room, office accessories and personal files are kept in the desk area. Wrapping paper and crafting supplies are stored in the tall antique Chinese cabinet across from it."

Material world: "Don't overlook materials and their tactile quality when creating a space for kids. In the main level of our house, we brought in cozy felt rugs and poufs from Muskhane (www.muskhane.com), a line that I couldn't resist carrying at Lotus Bleu. Plush pillows and blankets are also conducive to reading and resting."

Artful execution: "Our art is very personal and has meaning for our family. It is great for our children to grow up surrounded by works by young artists from their birth cultures (Vietnam and China), along with all of "our" cultures — including some from France (my husband is a French national) and from Madagascar (where he was born and his family still lives). And of course, there's art by local artists like Andrea Higgins and Reed Danziger mixed in."

On form and function: "I am all about things being original and inspiring, while also being very livable and functional for your daily life. Figure out the needs you have and your lifestyle before starting any design/renovation process. Then you can build your designs with those needs in mind, so the end result will be something realistic for you to enjoy and maintain."

Design: Jeannie Fraise, Lotus Bleu Home Decor & Interior Design, 325 Hayes St., San Francisco; (415) 861-2700. www.lotusbleudesign.com



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Playful touches, such as faux bois wallpaper in a vibrant red, keep the decor from being too serious.



David Wakely
Fraise's office is in a corner of the living room. The desk chair was a vintage find that she painted and reupholstered.

The Fraises' renovation included extending the building to achieve an additional 20 or so square feet on each of the top two floors, which allowed for an ensuite master bedroom and a larger kitchen. And by raising the house 18 inches, they gained about 40 more square feet for finished rooms on the lowest level while creating a more functional driveway and proper garage.

Early on, most of their furnishings were inherited from her family; think lots of French and English antiques. Over time, though, she realized that the pieces and traditional room setups didn't suit their lifestyle. In 2007, the couple adopted son Kai, 8, who was born in Vietnam; a year later, they adopted daughter Tulla, 7, who was born in China.

"What are we doing with these rooms?" Fraise recalls asking herself. "Often, the layout of Victorians has two parlors. We had these two beautiful rooms, but they were almost like museum spaces. We have young kids, and needed to figure out a way to use them."

So the large, formal dining table was out. Instead, Fraise devised a dining room that also serves as a family zone. Since natural light is sparse in there, she brightened things up with bold applications of color.

The pink-and-red Madeline Weinrib rug exhibits one of Fraise's favorite combinations. "I love red," she says. "There's joy to it." It's a color she associates with her travels in Southeast Asia, and it can signify good fortune and celebrations in some cultures.



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The designer uses neutrals to help ground bold colors and patterns.

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Kai and Tulla's preferred spot during meal times is the banquet seating built into the 6-foot-wide window niche. Its black-on-black patterned upholstery is punched up with graphic pillows by Judy Ross and Hable Construction.

Hot pink chairs with cream-

and-black block-printed cushions keep the glass-topped round dining table from feeling too serious. The surface treatments were also a balancing act: Fraise painted some of the walls gray to offset the areas covered in botanical and faux bois papers, both with a red back-ground.

Soft felt cushions by Muskhane beckon the kids to plop down and read or play. The lower shelves of a nearby bookcase hold their books and games, as do the baskets in front of the fireplace. Flanking the double-wide doorway are desks — one for Kai, one for Tulla — that can be used for crafts, writing and school work.

On the other side of the doorway is the living room, a corner of which is earmarked as Fraise's home office. The block-printed fabric from the dining chairs is carried over into her office chair, a vintage find from Past Perfect that she reupholstered and painted green. The chair's verdant shade is echoed in the living room rug, also by Muskhane, and a pair of

tufted, curved-back chairs. Red is an accent color in the room, appearing on a side table, pillows and other small accessories.

The camelback sofa is one of Fraise's family heirlooms, which she updated to match her playful style. The cushions were plumped up for comfort. The entire sofa was then re-covered in a subtle pink-and-white chevron and embellished with oversize nailhead trim.

Looking at her home or shop today, it's hard to imagine that there was a time when patterns weren't in Fraise's decorating repertoire. In her abode, she started out by experimenting with a chinoiserie wallpaper in the powder room; she certainly has come a long way since that project a dozen years ago.

Her advice for others easing into more vibrant patterns and palettes? "I prefer pulling two main or bolder colors out of the room, with more neutral browns, blacks and whites grounding the space. I look for textiles that mix each of those colors on their own with white," she says. "I'd start smaller with a few decorative pillows, a lamp or vases — and then go from there as I did."

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