

interiors[®]



ART IN DESIGN

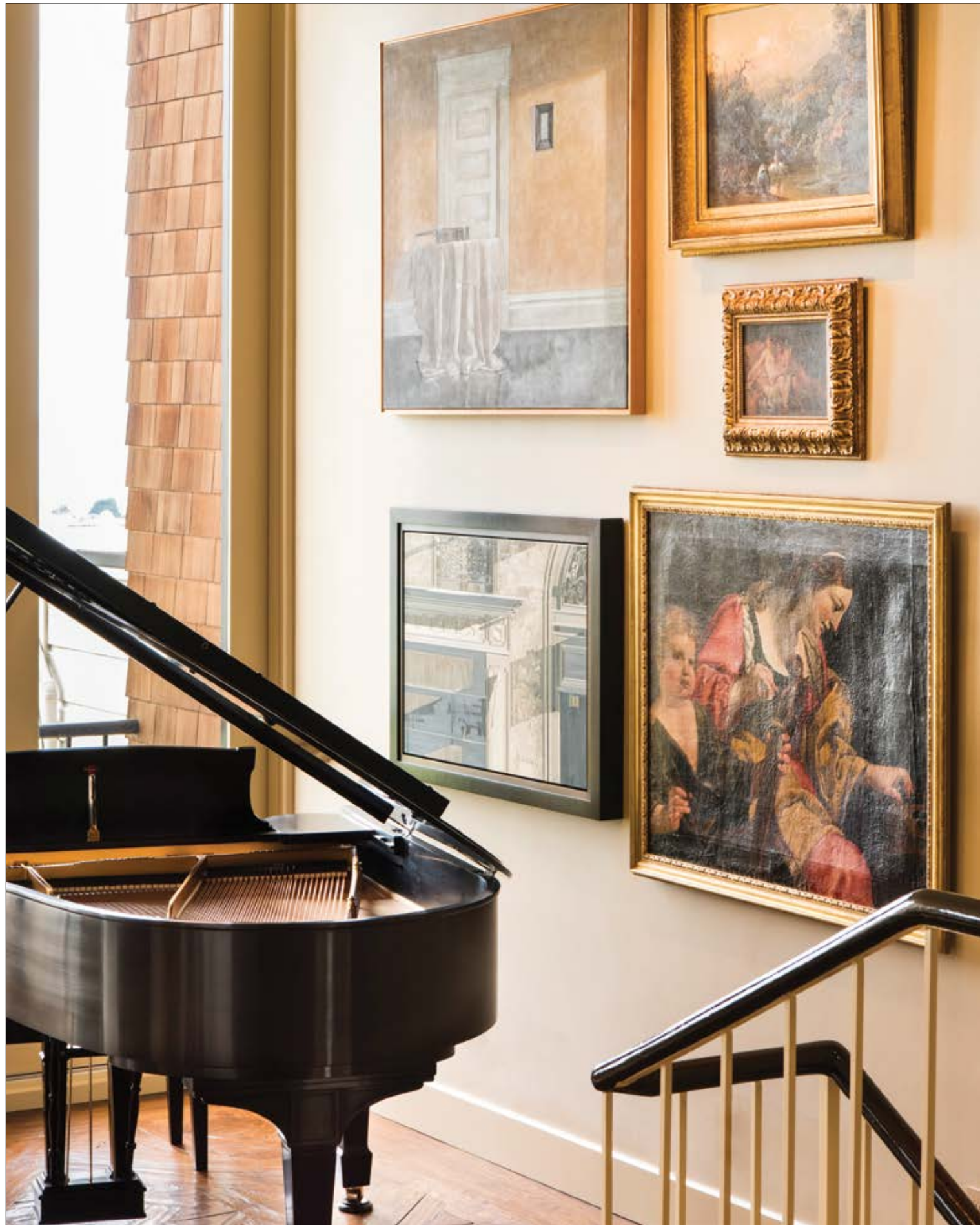


LA VIE EN
ROSE

INTERIOR DESIGN: THE WISEMAN GROUP

TEXT: LYDIA LEE

PHOTOGRAPHY: STEFANO SCATÀ



When San Francisco-based designer Paul Vincent Wiseman went on a buying trip in New York City with his clients a few years ago, he came across a massive, eight-by-eight-foot late Art Deco work in the booth of antiques dealer Bernd Goeckler at an art fair. Entitled *Diane the Huntress*, the panels of verre églomisé, or backpainted gilded glass, depict the Roman goddess of nature and were created by French artist Paule Ingrand in 1942. "I am always looking for those things that will anchor the story," says Wiseman. "The client had a lot of gilded frames and Baroque mirrors, and I knew the living room needed something with scale. When I saw it, I said, 'That's it! It's perfect.' "

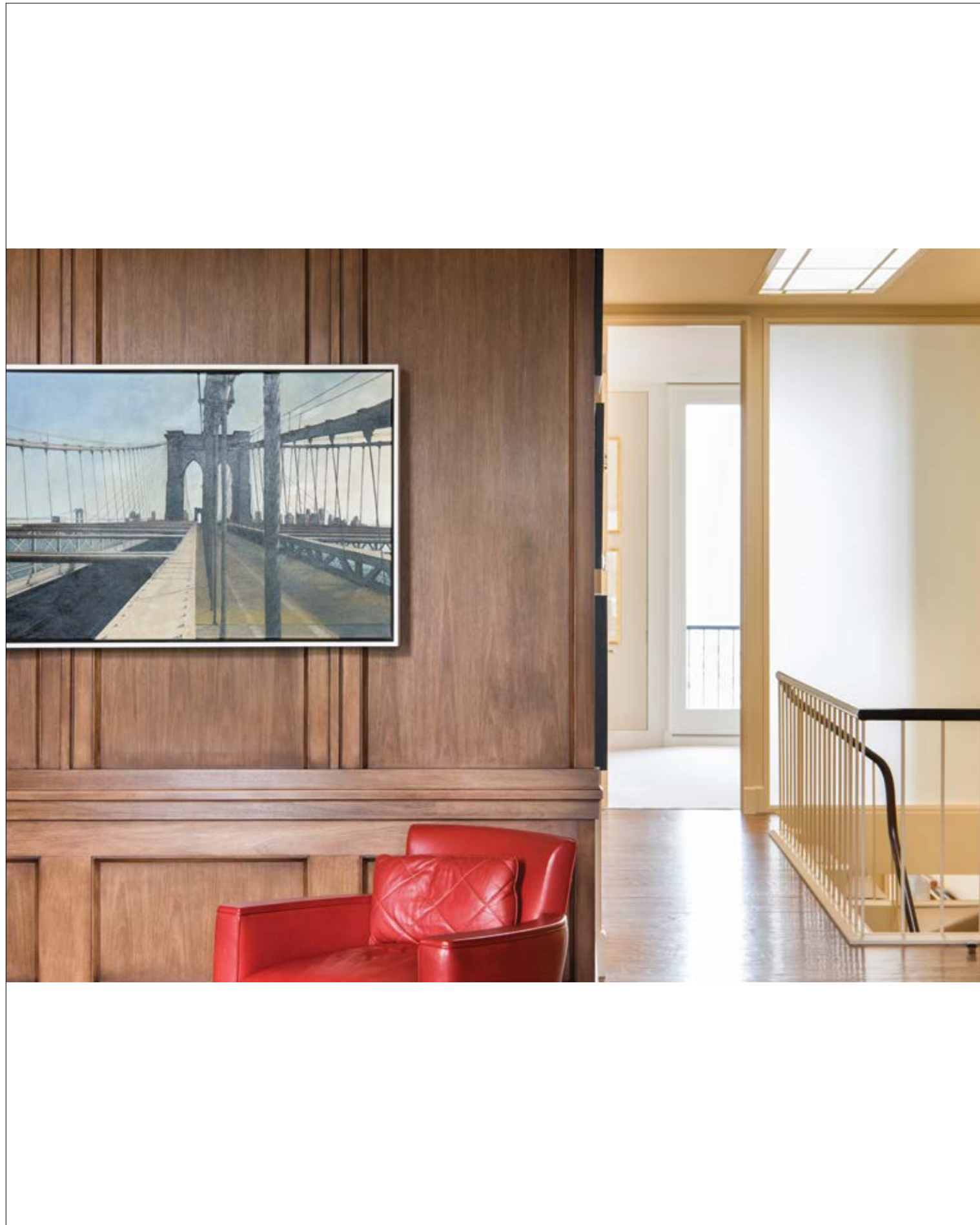
Wiseman had to broker relationships among all manner of period pieces for this project. The clients, a retired San Francisco couple, had amassed a sizeable and highly eclectic collection of art and antiques in their previous residence, and were downsizing to their new home in Pacific Heights. Wiseman's first step was to pare the collection down to the better works, including a pair of Louis XV chairs, a black-lacquered Art Deco credenza, and a commissioned chandelier of gold and white glass by Nathalie Pasqua. Then he and his team of designers and architects at the Wiseman Group worked to make the new house more functional for the couple and create a harmonious blend of disparate elements. "The whole house is filled with pieces that span the 18th century to now, and the play between the traditional and the modern elements is constantly going on," says Wiseman. "The house shows that you can like a lot of things."

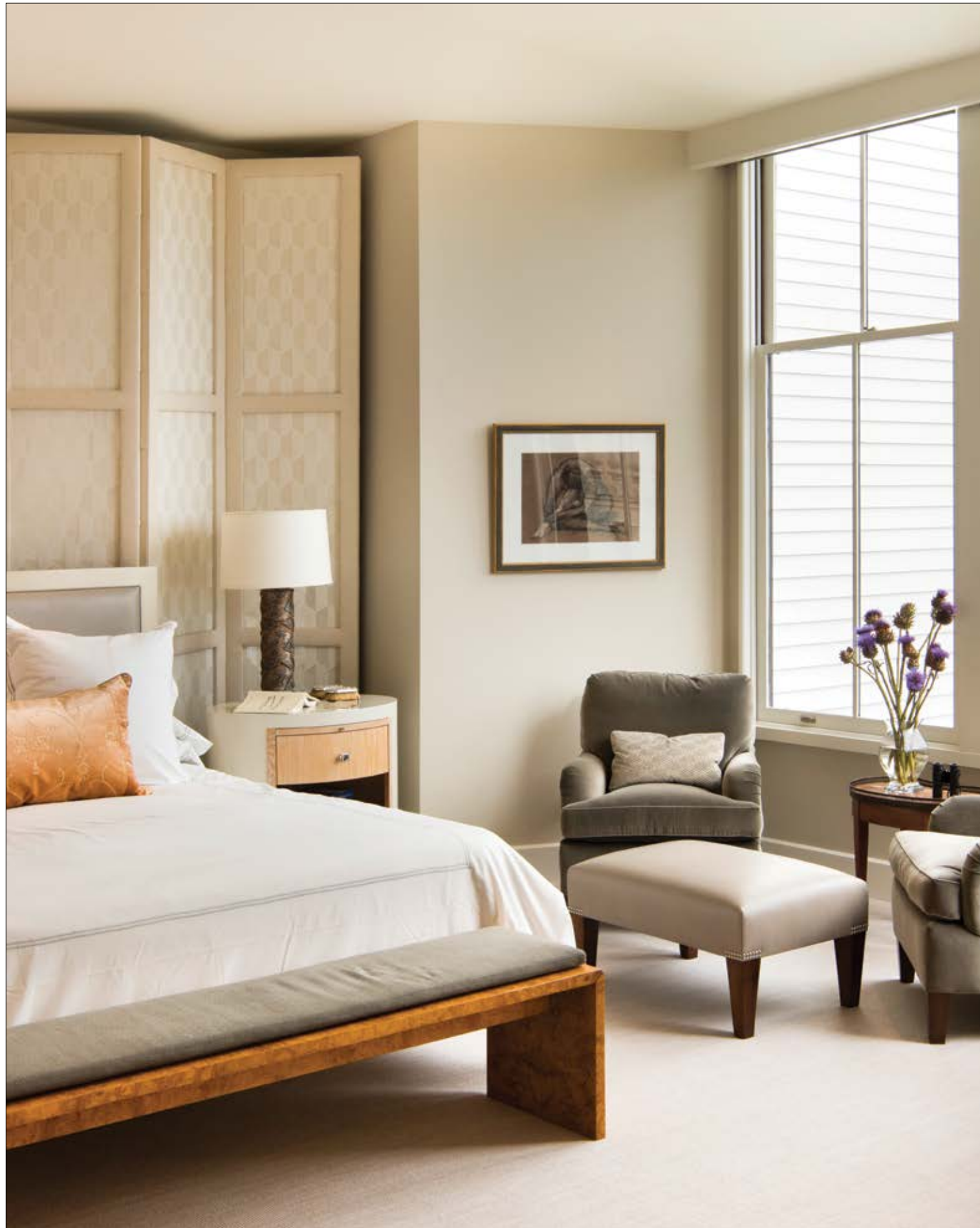
Architecturally, the house was a mix of styles. Designed in the mid 1960s, it was a Bay Area modernist version of a Victorian townhouse, an unexpected juxtaposition of boxy lines and natural shingle siding with mullioned bay windows and dentil moldings. Located on one of the best blocks in the city, it possessed an exceptional panorama of the San Francisco Bay and had plentiful natural light, nicely proportioned rooms and a graceful central stair. However, it had last been renovated in the 1980s, leaving it with clearly dated finishes.

The design team undertook a complete interior remodel to create a calm, neutral backdrop. To improve the home's functionality, they replaced a service stair with an elevator, converted the carport to a two-car garage, reconfigured the upper floor to give the master suite a larger bathroom and closet and added a significant amount of built-in storage. In lieu of fusty window treatments, they installed motorized shades. "To accommodate the eccentricity of the objects, we had to simplify the house," notes Wiseman.









Because there were windows only on the front and back of the house, the design team incorporated mirrored elements to maximize the light and visually widen the spaces. In the living room, slim mirrors on the sides of the new built-in bookcases are a small detail that has a big impact. Another innovation is in the master suite: A custom screen, made of plasticized mirror covered with a sheer linen overlay, gives off a delicate sparkle. "It doesn't actually reflect images, but adds depth and light," says Wiseman, who has since done an entire room paneled like this.

Multiple grid-patterned walls provide a level of surface detail while emphasizing modernity. The mirrored grid in the foyer and again in the master bath has a distinctively Art Deco flavor. Meanwhile, the wall that divides the living and dining room is clad in a grid of large-scale limestone tile, one of the few 1980s finishes that the designers saved, cleverly echoed in the square panels of *Diane the Huntress*. Inspired by Jean-Michel Frank, the stairwell wall was painted by Stencil Studios to resemble a grid of parchment panels.

Since the wife had lived in France and was an ardent Francophile, the designers also strove to evoke the romance of *la vie en rose*. "We created a good abstraction of a Parisian townhouse," says Wiseman. The completely redesigned foyer sets the scene with a very French cabochon limestone floor that complements the Art Deco credenza. The new kitchen features hanging shelving of polished nickel and glass inspired by brasseries, and hand-blown glass pendant lights by Marian Jamieson from A. Rudin, and generous use of Carrara marble continue the sense of vintage elegance. The adjoining breakfast nook features reproduction Prouvé chairs and a custom white oak banquette, which cleverly conceals piles of magazines behind its seat back.

The living room exemplifies Wiseman's mediation skills: The clients' existing overstuffed sofas are counterbalanced by a new Coraggio Pointu coffee table with the slenderest of tapered cast-bronze legs. Their Louis XV armchairs have been toned down and modernized with beige leather upholstery, blending in with the room's quiet palette. And one of their gilded mirrors is paired with a new Art Deco-style fireplace surround of crisp rectangles. "It's always fun when you work with people's beloved objects, because the space reflects their personality," says Wiseman. ■ *The Wiseman Group, wisemangroup.com*

