

Contrasts add character to Ron and Anna Rosella's living room, dominated by a 19th-century Italian mirror and an 18-foot sofa by Rodolfo Dordoni for Minotti. Paola Navone's crinkly Ghost chairs for Gervasoni are paired with the company's lacquered Log tables. D. J., the Chihuahua, scurries under Arco's Code bench by Miriam van der Lubbe; art over the sofa (from left) is by Angelina Nasso and T. L. Lange.



Making Light of It

Glamorous White: Stuart Silk Architects used grand gestures and a cleansing palette to turn a disjointed Seattle house into an elegant, wide-open home.



White

walls reflect light, but they seldom reflect warmth—a problem that has plagued man ever since he first set trowel to plaster. But white houses don't have to be cold and clinical, as Stuart Silk Architects recently proved with the remodel of a four-story home atop Seattle's Queen Anne Hill. Tempering white's chilly hauteur with warm woods and a host of theatrical flourishes, the designers injected an air of understated glamour that's more Fred and Ginger than Mies and Meier, more ermine than ice.

Homeowners Ron and Anna Rosella purchased the house a dozen years ago, when their son, Rhett, was 9. They were enticed by its central location and its stellar views of the city, mountains and bay. Unfortunately, the 1901 structure had endured many decades of reckless remodeling, leaving a warren of glum rooms linked by a circulation plan so disjointed that you practically needed a trail of bread crumbs to find your way around. The Rosellas wanted more light and more access.

Silk and his colleagues, design principal Aaron Mollick and project manager Dave King, tore down extraneous walls, expanded the living room and hid mismatched girders inside oak box beams. "The beams really modulate the house," observes Silk. To correct the circulation issues, the team eliminated wasted space upstairs, creating a breathtaking two-story entry hall. Now, floor-to-ceiling windows flood the foyer with light and views, while a 12½-foot pivoting glass door deposits visitors at the foot of a sinewy steel staircase. "The house desperately needed some drama," says Silk.

This page, from left: Design principals Aaron Mollick (left) and Stuart Silk with Anna Rosella (and Yorkie Stella); the dining area features stiletto-legged *Liz_b* chairs from Poltrona Frau and an Urban Hardwoods table topped with a craggy slab of black walnut. Opposite: Parallel counters wrapped in white CaesarStone lend both simplicity and order to the galley kitchen. Art on the back wall is by Eric Bashor.

PRODUCED BY LINDA O'KEEFFE AND LINDA HUMPHREY. PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN GRANEN. WRITTEN BY FRED ALBERT.



Anna's

biggest grievance with the old house was the kitchen. Dark and dated, it offered little connection to the living spaces or the view. The design team doubled the kitchen's size and opened it to the surroundings, choosing a galley layout to maximize the long, narrow space. A backsplash covered in back-painted glass reflects light (and the architects' minimalist approach), while a new window lets Anna savor the city's skyline from her sink. The opposing island stretches 24 feet, its snowy CaesarStone top and catwalk proportions offering an expansive stage for entertaining.

Although the kitchen looks like an obsessive-compulsive's dream, Anna admits she's actually not especially neat. "That's why I put that little pantry down there," she says, gesturing toward a larder concealed behind a trio of retractable doors. "If I'm having a dinner party and I'm running behind, I throw everything in and close the door and it looks perfect."

The white walls throughout took their cue from the CaesarStone, since it was easier to match the paint to the counters than the other way around. "Seattle gets gloomy in the winter," Anna says, "and I wanted everything to look crisp when it was gray." White's also a welcoming backdrop for the couple's extensive art collection, which incorporates everything from abstracts to advertising—most notably the vintage billboard on the mezzanine promoting an Argentinean weather girl (opposite). "It was her smile that attracted me," Anna says. "She just looked cheeky to me, like, 'I'm the weather girl, and you'll believe anything I say.'"

This page: On the second-floor mezzanine, newly revealed stairs to the bedrooms offer a view past a Lynn Criswell canvas to the front door; a Michael Webb painting peers out from a guest room at the end of the hall. Opposite: A CasaDesús ottoman anchors the adjoining sitting area, whose fireplace was stripped of excess adornment, making it appear as straightforward as the David Kroll painting above it.

Ron

Rosella, a produce wholesaler, left the decorating to his wife, whose approach was as forthright as her personality. "I didn't follow any rules," she explains, "because I didn't know the rules." Playful contrasts (the bedroom's ebony-colored faux-hoof lamps, the old-school chandelier hanging over the muscular steel staircase) keep any trace of coolness in check. Inspired by Christian Liaigre's Mercer hotel in New York City, Anna anchored one side of the living room with a taut, 18-foot Minotti sofa, offset by a quartet of crinkled-linen chairs (much of the furniture came from Limn in Seattle). A space-age *Altavilla* coffee table by Studio Cappellini rests atop a tawny Oushak carpet that's nearly threadbare in spots. Although the rug merchant offered to repair the damage, Anna graciously demurred. "Everything here is so white and crisp and clean and new, I just wanted to mix in something old," she says.

While visiting a local antiques mall, Anna spied a massive 19th-century mirror salvaged from a northern Italian villa. Although it was out of her price range, she returned every week to visit it. "One day I showed up and it had a big sign on it for 40 percent off, and it was in my range," she declares. The piece was too tall for her living room, but she didn't let that deter her. "I thought I could squeeze it in—like trying to get into a pair of jeans." In the end, she removed the gilded frame and simply leaned it atop the glass.

"This was the first time I ever did anything like this," admits the novice decorator. "There were a few mistakes, but nothing you can't hide in a storage room."

D. J. makes himself at home in the master bedroom, where a leather-wrapped Poltrona Frau Jackie bed by Jean-Marie Massaud is paired with Erich Ginder Studio's faux-hoofed Wilderness lamps. "It was just unexpected to see these lamps in a bedroom," explains Anna. "I thought they'd add interest against the stark white of the room." The lamps' dusky bases echo the colors in the Isa D'Arleins painting.





What the Pros Know

All whites are not created equal. (Benjamin Moore alone offers 180; the Rosella house was painted in its Simply White.) Whites fall into two camps: warm whites (those with yellow or red undertones) and cool whites (those with blue or black undertones). The former instill comfort, the latter are best for crisp, minimalist spaces. Leatrice Eiseman, a color consultant and the director of the Pantone Color Institute, cautions against mixing the two in the same room. "The warmer white will start to look dingy," she says. To distinguish them, compare paint chips under natural light; the underlying colors will be apparent. When combining several shades of white in a single room, as in the Rosella bathroom, it's best to vary textures and sheens. The marble tile, acrylic tub and painted cabinets work together because their finishes reflect light differently. You can achieve a similar effect by mixing gloss and matte paints.



Hovering

over the city like a cloud, the third-floor master suite embraces expansive views of snow-capped mountain ranges and ferries crisscrossing the silvery waters below. "It's pretty nice, especially on a crisp winter night," Anna says. "It just seems like everything twinkles." A sliding door reveals the bathroom, a luminous domain paved in Carrara marble mosaic tile in a "subway" pattern, installed from floor to ceiling. The same stone—in its slab form—wraps the top of the vanity and frames two sides of the shower, which is otherwise defined by a single glass panel.

"I didn't want a shower door," Anna explains. "I just wanted to be able to step in and out." An elliptical Waterworks tub in a high-gloss finish rests in front of the window; sliding doors lead to a small deck and access to the roof.

Schultz Miller oversaw the renovation of the 6,600-square-foot house, which took a year from start to finish. During that time, Ron kept his distance, letting his wife handle all the details. "He just wanted to know when he had to take his clothes out of the closet and when he could bring them back again," Anna recalls with a laugh. When he eventually showed up on the job site, the contractor stopped him to ask who he was.

Although it took Anna ten years to figure out what she wanted from the house, she thinks the planning paid off. "I'm really happy with it. It's not cluttered. It's easy and manageable," she says. "And the light! At different times of the day, each room lights up. It's almost like they're in their own little spotlight."

This page (from top): Book-matched Carrara marble surrounds an oversize sink in Anna's bath; a concrete drum table designed by Stuart Silk Architects services the shower, which is outfitted with Dornbracht fixtures. Opposite: A .25 tub from Waterworks rests atop shimmering squares of marble mosaic tile from Ann Sacks; Orizzonti's sleekly retro Moheli chair by Paola Navone has a storage drawer in its seat.





Details

[1] A 19th-century gilded chair mitigates the contemporary look of the bedroom sitting area, which is oriented around an existing fireplace re-clad in Carrara marble.

[2] Putting the staircase opposite the front door added drama but ran the risk of blocking a view. The architects engineered the dramatic stair to be as thin as possible, using oak treads to dampen sound and instill warmth.

[3] In the living room, a T. L. Lange painting echoes the colors in an African mask; a cylindrical *Aoy* lamp by Achille Castiglioni for Flos rests atop MDF Italia's *Edgar II* table by Bruno Fattorini.

[4] Art is everywhere in the home. Here, an architectural fragment hangs in a basement hallway that doubles as a gallery.

[5] A ceramic sculpture by Debra Fritts rests atop a tree stump that Anna Rosella found in Malibu. The glass wall behind it shields the staircase to the basement; Anna proposed this approach after seeing it in a Woody Allen film.

[6] Anna asked the architects for a grand entry, and she got it. "Every house should have a big door," she says.

[7] The architects' mantra was "reduce, reduce, reduce." Kitchen stools resemble simple oak boxes, and the backsplash was edited

down to a sheet of back-painted glass. The custom exhaust hood expels air with minimum fuss.

[8] The architects could have put conventional cabinets in the master bedroom, but they thought it would be more fun to create this Mondrian-like assemblage of push-latch compartments.

[9] A sliding door encloses the master bath; the recessed handle was fabricated from stock aluminum channel.

[10] Decking wraps the backyard pool, which offers a peekaboo view of the Space Needle. ☼
See Resources, last pages.

