

MODERN LUXURY

Interiors

CALIFORNIA

FRESH OUTLOOK

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CALIFORNIA DESIGN

AT HOME WITH GARY FRIEDMAN
OF RESTORATION HARDWARE

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SAN FRANCISCO

PERFECT HARMONY

With the help of architect Howard Backen, Restoration Hardware's Gary Friedman has created a personal paradise perched high above the San Francisco Bay.

By Amanda Friedman
Photography by David Duncan Livingston

Situated high on the hillside on Belvedere Island overlooking the San Francisco Bay, with postcard-perfect vistas of the Golden Gate Bridge in one direction and Sausalito in the other, Gary Friedman—the innovative co-CEO and chairman of Restoration Hardware (or RH, as it has recently been rebranded)—has crafted a serene haven that serves as a stark contrast, but perfect complement, to his exceptionally busy life. “I wanted to create a house that was completely balanced and symmetrical,” says the Bay Area native. “Anywhere you look, there is a focal point. The whole house kind of unfolds that way—it’s organized the way we’re organized.” It’s an aesthetic and belief system that Friedman has carried with him throughout his career, from his early days at Williams-Sonoma to the last 13 years with RH, during which he transformed the once

NATURAL ELEMENTS
From top left: Gary Friedman of Restoration Hardware in the entrance of his Belvedere Island home; like many of the rooms in the house, the kitchen design was dictated by its incredible surroundings, with windows featuring panoramic views of Mount Tamalpais. The painting is by Paul Manes.







PERSONAL TOUCH
Sitting on the desk in the office nook is a working typewriter and a Rodin-style clay statue that Friedman made in seventh grade.



“WE ALL LIVE IN HOMES. THEY ARE USUALLY OUR NESTS AND THE CENTER OF OUR WORLDS.”

fledgling Marin-based brand into the furnishing and design powerhouse that it is today. For Friedman, RH is more than work; it is a way of life, and nowhere is this clearer than at his own residence. The home is essentially a physical encapsulation of the brand, serving as his peaceful respite, part-time office and creative inspiration, all in one expertly designed 7,000-square-foot space.

When creating the house, Friedman called upon his longtime collaborator, renowned architect Howard Backen of the local firm Backen, Gillam & Kroeger. The duo began working together on Pottery Barn stores in 1993 and continues to create RH Galleries and showrooms throughout the United States today. According to Backen, the secret to their success is a shared vision. “For whatever reason, we think the same way. A thought can come through Gary’s head just prior to when I was going to think the same thing, or vice versa,” Backen explains. “This doesn’t happen often—you get maybe two or three in a lifetime, and he’s one of them.”

In this instance, Friedman and Backen were collectively inspired by the actual parcel of land: a steep, .75-acre plot embedded into the hillside from the entrance, but completely exposed with unparalleled views on the waterfront side. “Everything comes from what was given. You have to get into the house from one direction, and then look in another,” Backen says. “We wanted the major rooms to have an exposure to the city—imagine an amphitheater with the best seats, designed to see the stage, which happens to be San Francisco.” They decided upon an elegant Mediterranean-style residence with a natural, ocher-hued plaster exterior and a soaring living area that serves as the centerpiece of the



TREASURE HUNT From top: The guest room features a 19th century American antique bed that has inspired an upcoming RH collection; the table in the entryway is made of antique balustrades from London.



WIDE-OPEN SPACES From left: The extraordinary waterfront side of the residence contains an infinity pool and wraparound views of the San Francisco skyline and Golden Gate Bridge; the impressive living room serves as the main focal point of the home and has been decorated with an RH Deconstructed Chesterfield sofa and the brand's Foucault's Orb Crystal chandelier, as well as an antique Corinthian column glass floor lamp and an 18th century Ming dynasty cabinet, both of which have inspired RH collections. The painting is by David Bates.

house—complete with massive mahogany-and-glass sliding doors that open up to a dramatic infinity pool and those gorgeous views of the Golden Gate Bridge. It was an ambitious project that took more than five years to design and build, but the end result was well worth the wait.

Of course, architecture is only one aspect of a home, and for the interiors, Friedman looked for muted hues and natural materials that reflect the structure's magnificent surroundings and also blend in with the design. "People are sort of neutral in coloring, and the color in our design is usually in our eyes or in our hair," he explains. "I believe that furniture should harmonize with architecture in the same way—it should serve as an accent, like jewelry." It's an interesting sentiment taken in the context of RH, which has essentially built its success on creating well-made, sophisticated pieces that look equally appropriate in an urban bachelor pad as a palatial country estate.

Not surprisingly, many RH pieces can be found throughout the residence, and Friedman is constantly adding and rearranging as the collections evolve. But he also pairs them in interesting ways with antiques and vintage items found during his travels around the world. In the living room, for instance, antique chairs flank RH's popular Deconstructed Chesterfield sofa, while the brand's signature Foucault's Orb Crystal chandelier hangs overhead. His massive 10-seat dining table is from an 18th century monastery, and the surrounding cabinets are 18th century Ming dynasty antiques. Often, the pieces he finds serve as inspiration for future RH designs—Friedman is currently working on an Asian-style line inspired by those cabinets, and a version of the antique four-poster bed in the guest room will also soon be seen on the RH Gallery floors.

Despite the neutral palette, there are some bold pops of color—most notably from Friedman's art collection, which includes works by Paul Manes, David Bates and Nathan Oliveira. In fact, his search for art for his home led him to his latest passion: RH Contemporary Art, an impressive program that includes a gallery in New York City (an L.A. outpost is set to open later this year) and an interactive website. "The house has a lot of raw space, and I knew I had to buy some art," Friedman explains. "I hired a consultant who took me to an artist, who took me to galleries, and I found it overwhelming and confusing. I thought to myself: There might be a better way to make art more accessible, more understandable." And in true Friedman fashion, he set out to do just that.

And RH Contemporary Art is only the beginning: Friedman has plans to develop RH into an all-encompassing lifestyle brand, with boutique hotels, a fashion line, a music label and restaurants underway. But the home will always be the heart, both for Friedman and for RH. "We all live in homes. They are usually our nests and the center of our worlds," Friedman explains. "Home is where we spend most of our time, where we entertain, where we sleep, where we eat—and also where we dream." Hopefully, he never stops. ■



