

San Francisco



Out of the shadows

FOR UP TO 29 YEARS, THEY'VE PAID THEIR DUES AT THE BAY AREA'S BEST INTERIOR-DESIGN FIRMS. NOW THEY'RE BIG NAMES IN THEIR OWN RIGHT, AND IT'S CLEAR THAT THEY ARE PIONEERING A 21ST-CENTURY AESTHETIC ALL THEIR OWN.

BY DIANE DORRANS SAEKS

PORTRAITS BY PAUL TRAPANI



Design despotism is dead.

Michael Taylor, the emperor of California design in the '70s and '80s, who created superbly structural rooms with overscale tables, massive sofas, and timeless antiques for his favorite Pacific Heights clients—and gave those who dithered or quibbled a muddle of chintz—must be spinning in the hereafter. Yet the glamour, intelligence, worldliness, and confidence that drove Taylor, John Dickinson, Anthony Hail, and San Francisco's other top designers for decades have not gone the way of the shag carpet and the overwrought sofa. A second generation of trendsetting city designers, now in their late 30s and 40s, have come fully into their own in this new century. It is time to announce their striking talent.

For nearly two decades, I've been watching the rise of this group as they have apprenticed in the studios of San Francisco's boldest-name designers, often working anonymously as part of a team.



WHO'S WHO: 1) Brenda Mickel, 2) Greg Stewart, 3) David Oldroyd, 4) Greg Elich, 5) Melissa Warner, 6) Carrie Miller, 7) Julie Massucco, 8) Matthew Leverone, 9) Dorothy Greene, 10) Steve Henry, 11) Maria Quiros



Greg Elich

YEARS TOILING: 22, at Douglas Durkin Design since 2002.

CALLING CARD: "I joke that an architect must make a building durable and permanent-looking, while a decorator's challenge is to make a room durable but spontaneous-looking. Ideally, no one should know the decorator has even been there, much less identify who it was! Our goal is always to establish a certain order to a room, but without overprogramming it." **NEW DIRECTION IN DESIGN:** "We're doing a Tribeca loft, a modern Venice Beach house, a Spanish colonial in Houston, an Edwardian in San Francisco, and new contemporary Bay Area houses. We keep our work eclectic and collaborate very closely with architects."

RIGHT: For his San Francisco Victorian, Elich paired a mid-20th-century coffee table from Goodwill with mid-20th-century sofas upholstered in a Larsen fabric. SEE PAGE 99 FOR RESOURCES.



"CULL CURRENT IDEAS FROM THE MARKETPLACE AND COMBINE THEM WITH ELEMENTS THAT HAVE STOOD THE TEST OF TIME." —GREG ELICH