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Mirror images

Reflective surfaces and a repetition of materials are the magic ingredients that visually enlarge this small Californian apartment

Report: Caroline Murphy

Walking into his client's one-bedroomed pied-à-terre, and ignoring for a moment the out-dated decor and awkward layout, designer Gerald Jacobs was immediately drawn to the window. "The main asset of the apartment was the San Francisco Bay view," he recalls. "It probably constituted about 30% of the property's value."

With his back to the room and his eyes fixed on the inspiring panorama in front of him, Jerry began to plan the design scheme that would transform the small condominium unit into a deceptively spacious, elegant apartment. In his plans, mirrors were key to the solution.

"We installed wall-to-wall mirrors in the living room, kitchen and bathroom, and used mirrors to cover two windows that faced out to the driveway. The bathroom

TOP LEFT: BUILT-IN APPLIANCES, INCLUDING, OF COURSE, AN AMERICAN SIDE-BY-SIDE FRIDGE-FREEZER, KEEP LINES SIMPLE IN THE KITCHEN

TOP RIGHT: THE REFLECTIVE QUALITY OF THE MIRRORED SPLASHBACK IS ECHOED BY THE HIGH-GLOSS FINISH OF THE JADE MARBLE WORKTOP

OPPOSITE: A WALL BETWEEN THE LIVING AREA AND KITCHEN WAS DEMOLISHED FOR A MORE OPEN-PLAN LOOK. THE FEELING OF SPACIOUSNESS IS ENHANCED BY CONSISTENT USE OF PALE MATERIALS AND TACTILE, SMOOTH FINISHES

mirror was so large it had to be installed before the new wall was constructed," says Jerry, pointing out structural changes that allowed the bathroom to be enlarged and the kitchen to be opened up to the adjacent living area.

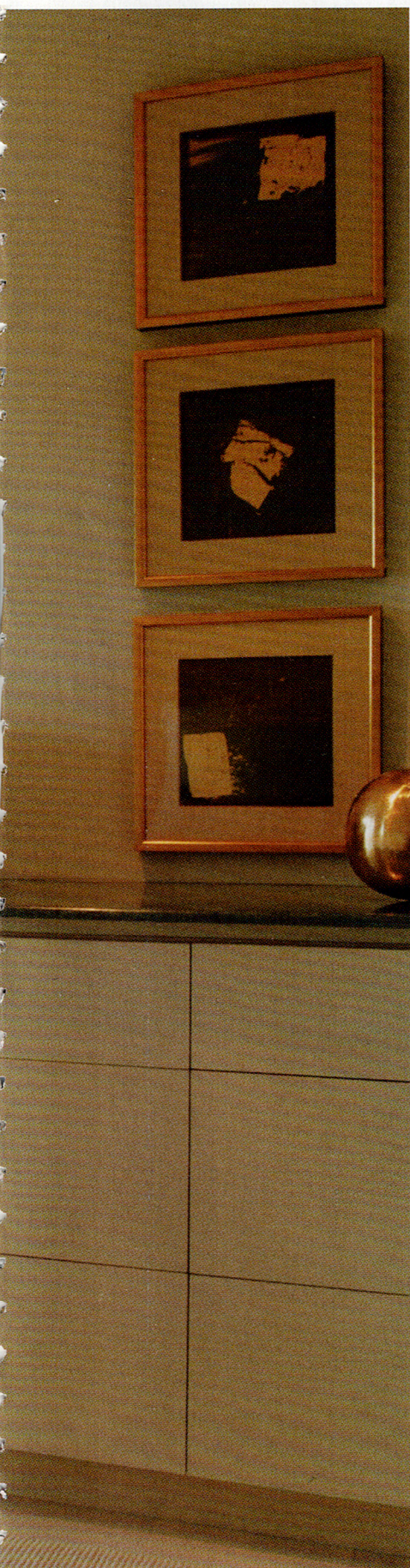
The kitchen features laminate cabinetry, its light almond colour toning with the paleness of the Polar Ash strip wooden flooring. Bull-nose edges on the Chinese jade marble worktop add a softer note to the straight geometry elsewhere. The marble has been polished to a high gloss and is almost as reflective as the mirrors that line the walls, bouncing light from the under-cabinet strip lights around the kitchen. The mirrors double up as wipe-clean splashbacks, and capture fragments of the outside view.

"The kitchen was opened up to the living area and a peninsular dining table was created to divide the two spaces. Now the owner can enjoy the beautiful view





THE BEDROOM CREDENZA, WITH THE SAME
LIGHT-ALMOND LAMINATE AS THE KITCHEN
CABINETS, OFFERS CONCEALED STORAGE
FOR THE TELEVISION



TOUCH-LATCH DOORS ALLOW FOR A
SMOOTH, UNBROKEN SURFACE ON
THE CRENZA

reflected in the mirrored splashback while sitting with his back to the window, or even when using the kitchen sink," comments Jerry.

The owner is an Austrian businessman who needed a San Francisco base for his frequent business trips to the city. He had specified a contemporary style, characterised by pale colours and simple lines. Jerry delivered this by limiting the palette of colours to warm whites, delicate greens and soft beiges, and by repeating certain materials. Throughout the apartment, walls are painted in smooth white, "adding a soft suede look", and the laminate on the kitchen units is found again on the cabinetry in the bedroom, and reappears on furniture within the bathroom and living room.

Jerry exercised restraint not only in the materials, but also in the finishes he selected. So, for example, the jade marble that tops the bedroom credenza is polished to the same high shine as in the kitchen. "All the rooms offer the same material and colour combinations, thus creating a high degree of consistency, which reinforces the overall design statement," he explains. "Continuity adds strength and a larger-scale dimension, while the use of a single finish material guarantees it."

The laminate and marble credenza in the bedroom is a long, sleek run of units, with touch-latch doors for a minimalist effect. It conceals the television in a hatch that can be elevated or lowered using remote-control. In order to preserve the enviable view from the bedroom,



THE BEDROOM FEATURES TWO LAYERS OF BLINDS: THE SHEER INNER BLIND OFFERING PROTECTION FROM DIRECT SUNLIGHT, THE HEAVY COTTON BLIND COVERING THE WHOLE WALL FOR A GREATER PRIVACY

window dressing is kept simple – a sheer weave roman blind diffuses any glare from the sun, while a white cotton blind above it stretches the length of the wall. This allows total privacy when required.

Jerry's client remained in Europe during the renovations and communicated with him by e-mail. "It was surprisingly easy," says Jerry. "We always agreed on taste and solutions, making it a very smooth job." The client must have found it painless too. On the day he arrived to occupy

the apartment, music was playing, the pantry and bar were fully stocked, and the bed – complete with upholstered headboard, crisp cotton bedding and plumped-up feather pillows – was already made. Just what every jet-lagged traveller needs.

BARE ESSENTIALS

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