

NOE VALLEY LIGHTBOX









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Samaha+Hart Architecture is a San Francisco based office established in 2006 by Bassel Samaha and Heather Hart. The firm's work is by design diverse, with a range of residential and commercial projects that vary in scale. The aspirations of each client and the characteristics of every site are individually and uniquely considered. The office is committed to producing work which is conceptually based and rigorously detailed; incorporating innovative materials and sustainable practices.

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Behind a magically restored 19th century façade in San Francisco lies an equally magical, modern renovation that brings together stunning design and clever functionality.

Having undergone many renovations in the past, the house had, for the most part, become a maze of rooms and circuitous circulation systems that were in desperate need of reorganisation. Following the new renovation, all that was left of the original Victorian dwelling was the façade, a living room, and a den directly behind it. Heritage overlays required the maintenance of the façade, but it was the owners' desire for secluded rooms near the entry that necessitated the retention and restoration of the existing rooms.

An intimate ambiance pervades these two front rooms, which sit in distinct contrast to the large living rooms toward the rear of the house. Utilised for entertaining and day-to-day living, these bright and inviting living spaces take advantage of the available views over the backyard and across the surrounding neighbourhood, while expanses of glazing see southern light pour into the interior. This composition also produces a wonderful new engagement between the occupants and the home's location.

Bright and beautiful, the kitchen/living area has been expressed primarily in white, with pops of colour appearing in the forms of furniture and artwork. A wonderfully reflective space, the kitchen in particular features a glittering silver splashback, which is both chic and fun.

Central to the whole design is a new staircase that connects all three levels of the house. Translucent resin makes for interesting stair treads, with the translucent steps permitting illumination from the operable skylight overhead to filter down through each level of the house. An adjacent glass balustrade further enhances the amount of prevailing light. In the evenings, the stairs are lit from below, thus the staircase itself acts as a form of lightbox, both during the day and at night, providing the inspiration for the residence's name.

This pursuit of light manifests itself most clearly in the extension at the rear elevation of the house. Kept monochromatic, the palette of these new spaces sits in deference to the ornate nature of the front. The deck is cantilevered so as to allow its underside to be finished in painted corrugated metal, which in turn reflects light into the lowest level and resists the subterranean feeling. The bottom floor houses a games room and the guest suite, for privacy. On the home's third level, the master suite enjoys expansive vistas over the Noe Valley.

This extensive reinvention has afforded the home owners a simply beautiful home, one that shows how innovation on behalf of an architect can lead to a whole new experience for an existing home.