



The homeowners painted their front door a sunny shade of yellow to warm up the contemporary gray facade.



An avid cook, owner Ching-Yee Hu requested a total kitchen overhaul. The walnut cabinetry and shelving is by Henrybuilt.

Open risers and a steel-mesh rail allow sunlight to filter through the front stairway into the rest of the house.

haul. It was an ambitious ask. “The roof came off,” McElroy says. “We lowered floors, raised ceilings, and moved walls.” Although the resulting structure is *technically* the same Glen Park residence, says Hu, after such a stud-scraping remodel, “I tell people we kept the address but rebuilt the house.”

Luckily, Hu and Orenstein gave McElroy and his team free rein. “We’re low-key people,” says Hu. “We wanted something comfortable and unpretentious—not a showpiece.” While the home’s former ’90s-era finishes were “very Best Western,” recalls McElroy, the new design is unabashedly contemporary, all the way down to the custom floating stairway bordered by perforated steel.

The house’s previous narrow kitchen was so tiny that Hu and Orenstein joked it was like living on a boat. An avid cook and the founder

**Ching-Yee Hu** and Gary Orenstein spent eight years living with their two young daughters in what they darkly called their “clown house”: a three-story Glen Park abode that appeared spacious from the street but felt comically cramped inside. “There was absolutely no flow—it drove us crazy,” says Hu. “You had to climb two flights of stairs just to reach the front door, and when you opened it, you spilled immediately into the dining room.”

Fed up, they hired architect Tom McElroy and designer Marina Kruger of McElroy Architecture to give their house of quirks a space-making over-

# Behind the Yellow Door

**A cramped Glen Park “clown house” loses its maddening quirks, but holds onto a few surprises. By Lauren Murrow**

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“We wanted our house to be warm, friendly, and down-to-earth,” says Hu. A series of expansive sliding glass doors connects the living room to the deck and yard.



In the living room, Benjamin Moore's Onyx paint offsets the family's colorful collection of cookbooks.



of Sprogs, a healthy-snack company, Hu yearned for a roomy, hardworking kitchen. McElroy expanded the room by nearly 100 square feet, installing walnut cabinetry and an open shelving system by Henrybuilt.

In contrast to the bright, white-on-wood kitchen, the adjacent living room is darkened by Benjamin Moore's Onyx paint. “We're not huge

decorators; we don't have ostentatious furniture,” explains Hu. “Against a black backdrop, even cookbooks and kids' toys look great.”

Though the couple claim to be understated when it comes to decor, they made an exception in the bathrooms. “We went a little flamboyant,” says Hu. The powder room pops in geometric ceramic from Heath, the



kids' bathroom explodes in blue starburst tiles by Clé Tile, and the master bathroom is aswirl in busy cement slabs from Original Mission Tile. (“That's not a bathroom for hangovers,” jokes McElroy. “It's a very loud experience.”) The latter serves as a whimsical backdrop to the waist-high Japanese-style soaking tub, which measures three and a half feet in diameter. “The bathroom used to be a place to get into and out of as quickly as possible,” says Hu. “Now it's about luxuriating.”

In a house packed with dramatic upgrades, the most drastic change-up is the new open-air family room, which is separated from the backyard by 17 feet of sliding glass. The indoor-outdoor layout has been a particular boon for the couple's kids, aged seven and nine, who bounce between the kitchen, family room, and lawn, as well as for the family dog, Milo, who has adopted a sunbathing habit. “It's a real luxury to live in the city,” says Hu, “but still be able to sprint straight into the backyard.” ■

The deep soaking tub measures three and a half feet in diameter and affords views all the way to Daly City. “This tub has transformed me from a lifelong shower taker into a devoted bath person,” says Hu.

The owners chose complementary graphic blue tiles by Original Mission Tile (above) and Clé Tile (below) for the master and kids' bathrooms.

