

# The Looker

Quarterly Section  
**Design Scout**

EDITED BY LAUREN MURROW



**Nap time in outer space:** Sisters Finn (left) and Ivy Lister in the astronaut-papered room that Ivy shares with her twin brother, Ozzy.



## Studio 54 for Four-Year-Olds

A PENINSULA RENOVATION TAKES CUES FROM DIANA ROSS, DOLLY PARTON, AND DORA THE EXPLORER.

BY LAUREN MURROW

“THE KEY WORD HERE,” says architect David Yama, “is disco.” It’s an unusual admission from a designer best known for creating minimalist, modern spaces. But the genre—most commonly associated with polyester bell-bottoms, mirror balls, and Afros—directly informed the gut renovation of this four-bedroom house owned by LinkedIn VP Jonathan Lister and his wife, Heather Finlay, a former television producer. After moving from Toronto to Palo Alto with four kids in tow, the uprooted Finlay—a true child of the ’70s—threw herself into the yearlong remodel. “When you have four kids and you’re driving a minivan around Palo Alto, you’re craving disco,” says Yama resignedly.

Having converted the dark, ’70s-era Eichler into a white, light-flooded open floor plan, Yama introduced Finlay to interior designer Alison Damonte, whom Finlay calls her “design soul sister.” With that, the austere white walls were gone, soon to be splashed with neon lacquer, metallic wallpaper, and pop art. The Yama and Damonte tag team created an *Odd Couple* dynamic of sorts: “I represent the quieter side of the house,” says

1. From left: Ruby, 11; Jonathan Lister; Ivy, 4; Ozzy, 4; Heather Finlay; and Finn, 9.
2. A cloudlike vintage dining table by Giuseppe Raimondi and the PXL pendant lamp by Fredrik Mattson in the dining room. “Most home-owners with four kids wouldn’t be comfortable with a lot of white surfaces,” says architect David Yama. “Heather didn’t have those normal practical hang-ups.”
3. “Every day at 3 o’clock it’s like disco hour,” says interior designer Alison Damonte of the mirror-ball reflection.



Yama, “and Alison brought out the exuberant side.”

While most parents look at white upholstery and mirrored surfaces and immediately see visions of juice spills and fingerprints, Finlay had no such hang-ups. “I just wanted the house to be fun and bright,” she says, “and not take itself too seriously.” She and Damonte sought out the anti-beige. “For once, the question wasn’t ‘What will you still love in 15 years?’” says Damonte. “It was ‘What do you love right now?’”

“I tried to gravitate toward a clean, modern aesthetic in the beginning, but I kept going back to sparkles and hot pink,” says Finlay. Her kids, aged 4 (twins), 9, and 11, were also involved in the decorating process, particularly Ruby, the eldest. “If she were older, I would hire her as a design assistant,” says Damonte. “She has great taste—and very strong opinions.” Kid-friendly details abound throughout, from chalkboard paint in the hallway to graphic metallic astronaut wallpaper in the twins’ bedroom.

Even Yama, typically a champion of minimalism, fell for the final product. “From a design perspective, the char-



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acter of the house is that hint of sparkle," he says. "The beauty is in the little flashy details, those unexpected glittery moments." Disco accents glint from every room: a mirrored backsplash in the kitchen, silver foil wallpaper in the powder room, brass and chrome furniture in the living room, and a mix of shiny and matte glazed tiles in the master bathroom.

The one room not marked by flashiness is the master bedroom. But though it lacks glitter, it's not devoid of humor: A series of popular hip-hop lyrics, printed by Portland letterpress studio Paper Jam Press, is mounted in stately brass frames above the headboard. "We're a music-filled household," says Finlay. "My kids know all the Run DMC lyrics."

In fact, in this family of music lovers, the most divisive piece is the living room's prominent Dolly Parton portrait that Damonte had framed in hot pink Lucite. "I love it," gushes Finlay, "though I'm not sure that my husband loves it as much as I do." ("He's very comfortable in who he is to let that happen," jokes Yama.) Though not involved in the renovation process, Lister was supportive of his wife's proclivity for the glitzy. "He was very cool to let me bring in the lilac and fuchsia and glitter," remarks Damonte.

After all, as any baby boomer knows, disco isn't a look—it's a lifestyle. When the renovation was complete, Damonte presented Finlay with a disco ball that now adorns the fireplace hearth beneath a large skylight. "Every day at 3:30, the sun shines in and light reflects all around the room," says Finlay. "As soon as the kids get home from school, we turn on the music and have disco hour." □



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1. Damonte and Finlay chose paintings by Arite Kannavos (*Imagine* and *Turn Right*, left) and Angie Crabtree (*105 Carats*, right) for the living room.

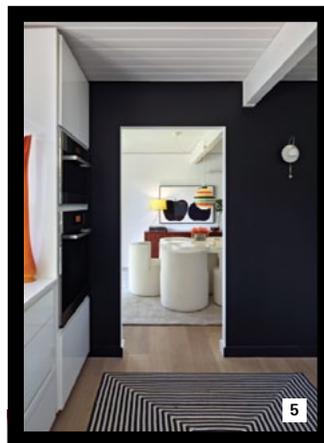
2. Finn and Ivy play in the kitchen, Finlay's favorite room in the house.

3. Finlay's Dolly Parton poster, which Damonte had framed in hot pink Lucite.

4. A series of hip-hop lyrics adorns the master bedroom.

5. The view from the kitchen into the dining room. "Heather didn't want beige anywhere," says Yama.

6. "I knew most people would hate it, but I loved this wallpaper right away," says Finlay, of Joanna Bean's *Luxury* wallpaper for Flavor Paper. "It reminded me of a Diana Ross song."



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