

EXCLUSIVE + RENOVATIONS

Before & After: A Data Scientist Renovates His Childhood Home in San Francisco

By [Debra Goldberg](#) / Photos by [Lucas Flitzhalm](#) / July 16, 2019

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Sprucing up the Cole Valley residence, which was built by the homeowner's parents in 1939, was a matter of navigating treasured memories.

When Ed and Leslie Fine set about updating their home, set high on a hill in San Francisco's Cole Valley, it wasn't simply a matter of knocking down walls and raising roof beams. Built by Ed's parents in 1939, and purchased from his mother a few years back, the two-story house was freighted with memories.

"To me, it was just a box—beautiful, but a box," says Leslie, a product manager at Salesforce. "Whereas for Ed, it was, 'But we can't mess with the lip of the staircase, because that's where I used to launch my Matchbox cars!'"

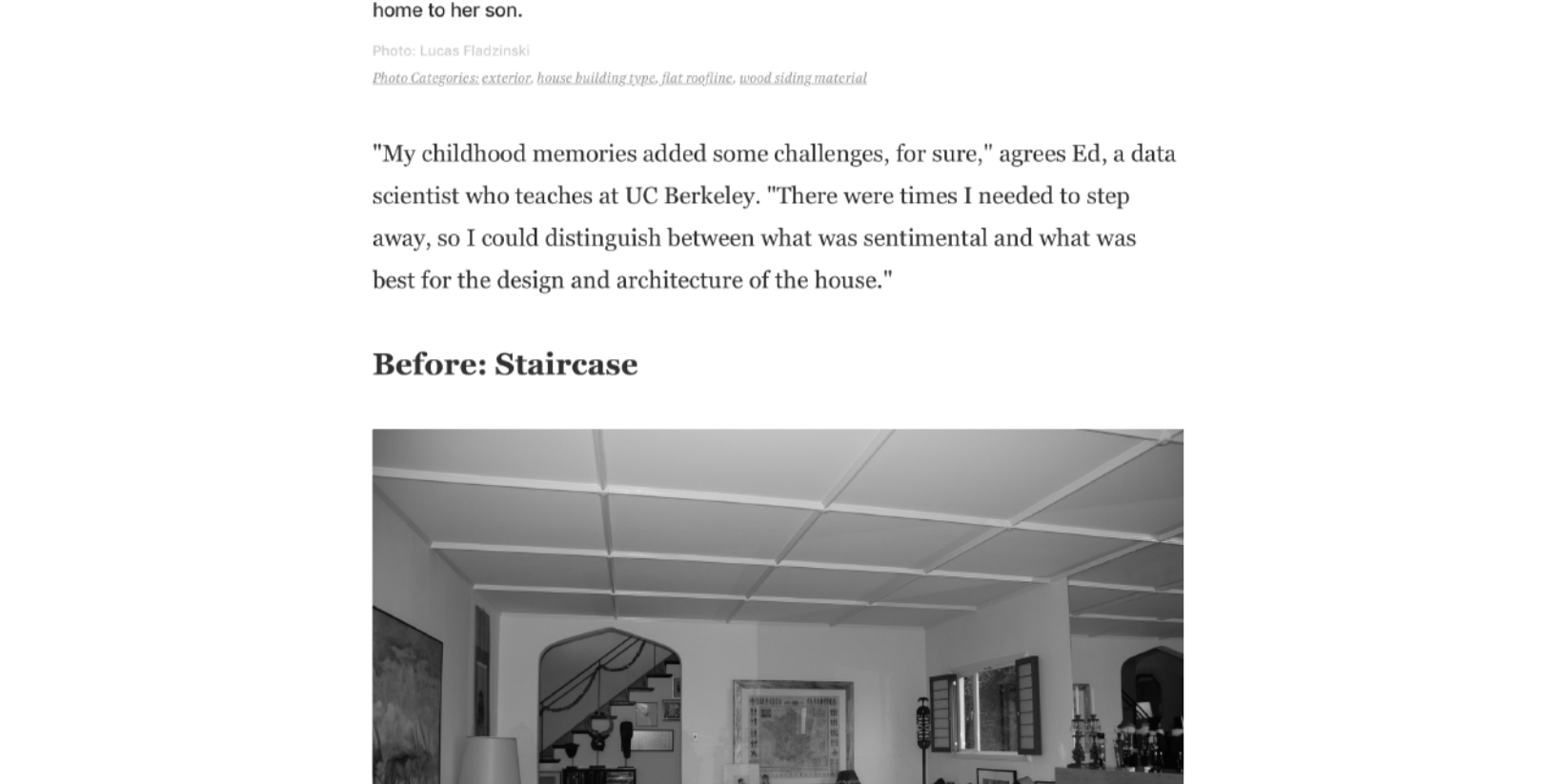
Before: Exterior



Before: Cole Valley House exterior

Courtesy of Jennifer Weiss Architecture
Photo: Casper/Casper creative, wood/interior, midlife, house, building, row, house, modern

After: Exterior

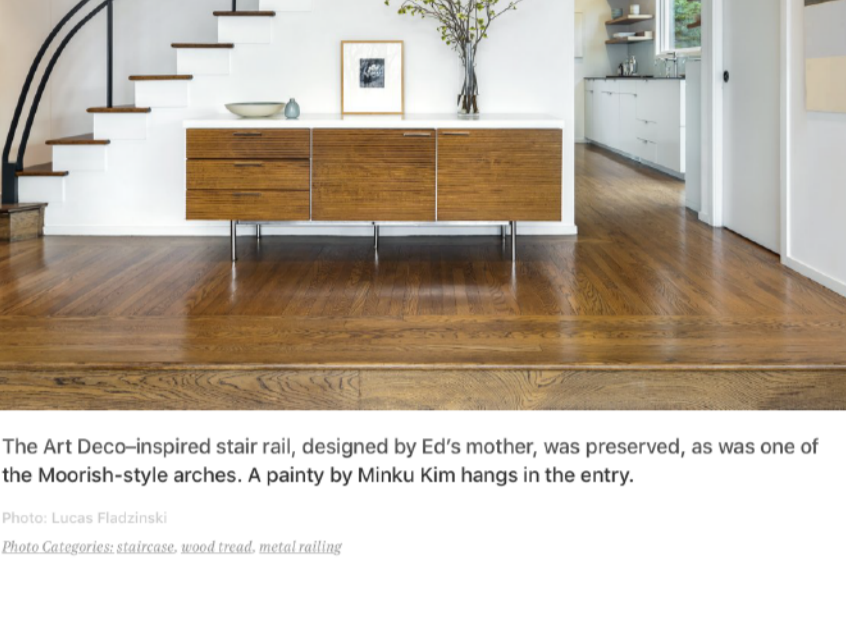


Mahogany detailing accents a smooth, stucco facade. Homeowner Ed Fine's father, a doctor at University of California, San Francisco, bought the property in 1939 for a modest sum and built a home for his small family. He passed away while Ed was in his teens, and his wife Emily lived here alone until her 70s, when she decided to downsize and sell the home to her son.

Photo: Lucas Flitzhalm
Photo: Casper/Casper creative, house, building, row, hot, modern, wood, white, modern

"My childhood memories added some challenges, for sure," agrees Ed, a data scientist who teaches at UC Berkeley. "There were times I needed to step away, so I could distinguish between what was sentimental and what was best for the design and architecture of the house."

Before: Staircase



Before: Staircase

Courtesy of Jennifer Weiss Architecture
Photo: Casper/Casper creative, chair, table, dining, coffee, table, sofa, wood, interior, fireplace, staircase, modern, fireplace

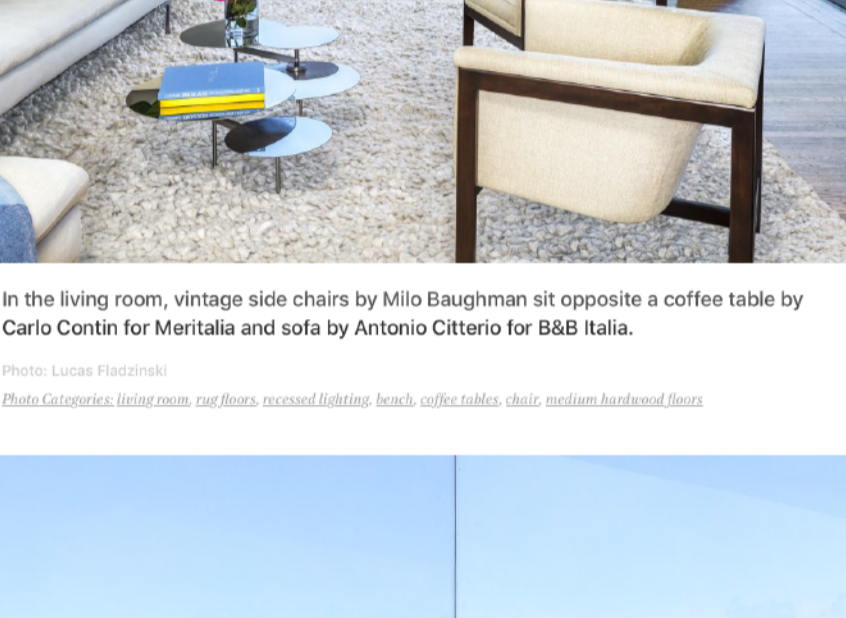
After: Staircase



The Art Deco-inspired stair rail, designed by Ed's mother, was preserved, as was one of the Moorish-style arches. A painting by Minku Kim hangs in the entry.

Photo: Lucas Flitzhalm
Photo: Casper/Casper creative, wood, floor, modern, interior

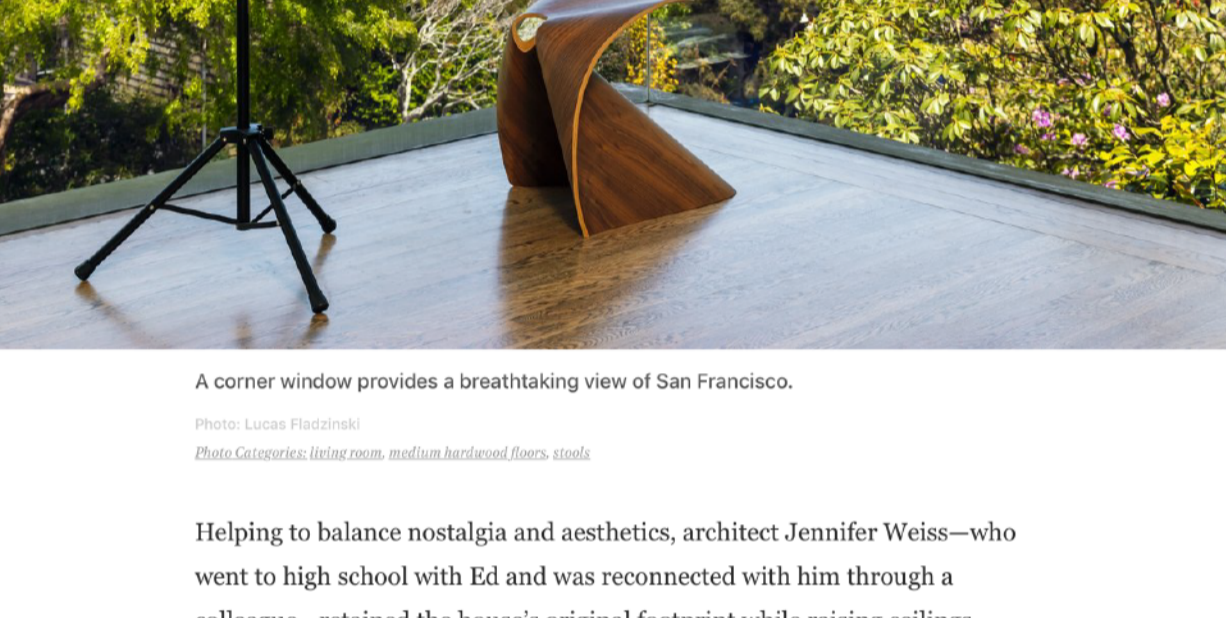
Before: Living Room



Before: The original living room had a fireplace, and while Ed struggled with the idea of losing it, the homeowners finally decided to remove it in order to amplify the view. Ed and Leslie's upcoming garden remodel, however, will include an outdoor fireplace.

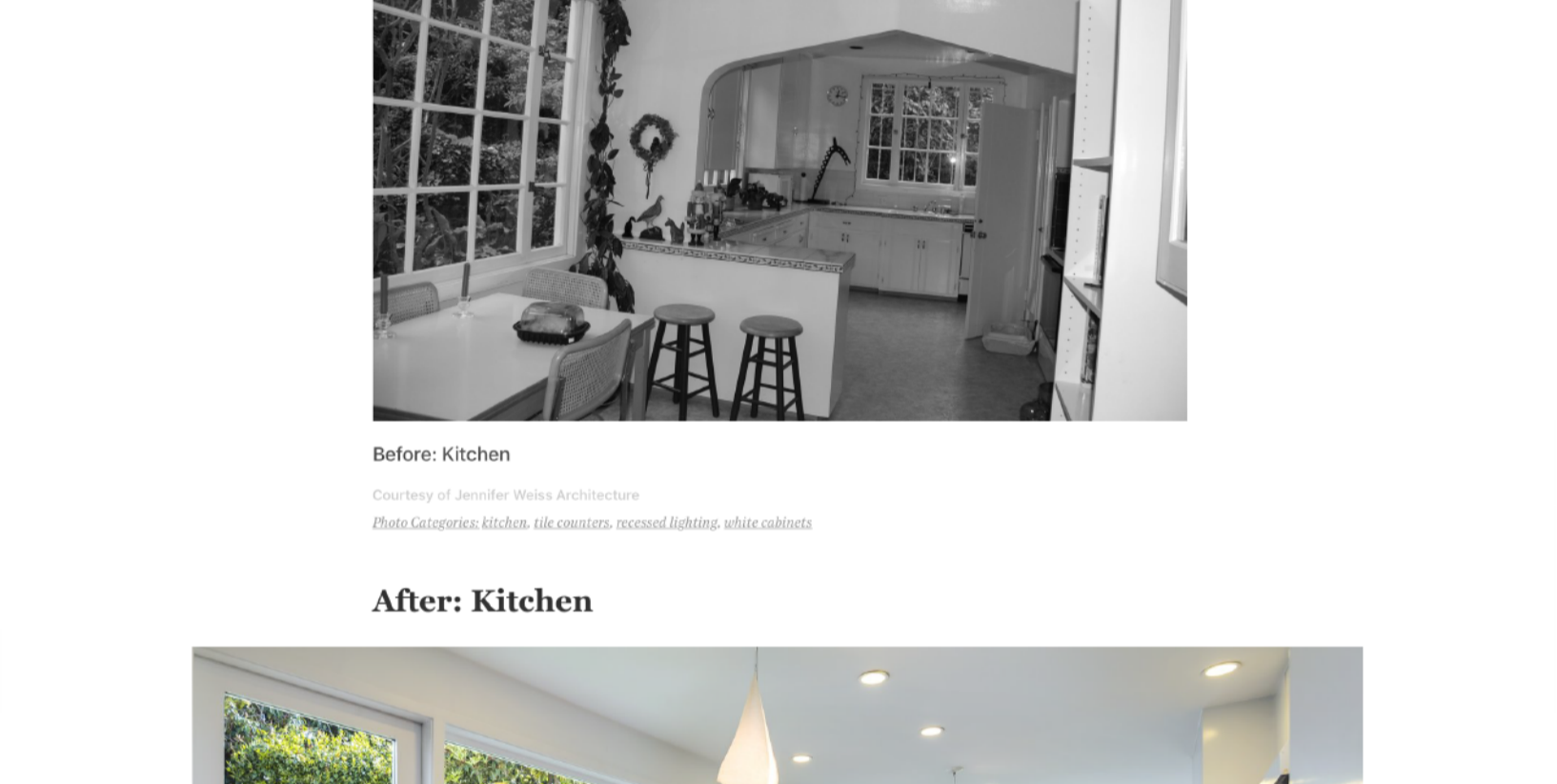
Courtesy of Jennifer Weiss Architecture
Photo: Casper/Casper creative, table, dining, wall, fireplace, staircase, modern, interior, fireplace, wood, interior, fireplace, chair, sofa

After: Living Room



In the living room, vintage side chairs by Milo Baughman sit opposite a coffee table by Carlo Cottari for Martalia and sofa by Antonio Citterio for B&B Italia.

Photo: Lucas Flitzhalm
Photo: Casper/Casper creative, car, floor, modern, dining, bench, coffee, table, chair, modern, hardwood, floor



A corner window provides a breathtaking view of San Francisco.

Photo: Lucas Flitzhalm
Photo: Casper/Casper creative, modern, medium, hardwood, floor, wood

Helping to balance nostalgia and aesthetics, architect Jennifer Weiss—who went to high school with Ed and was reconnected with him through a colleague—retained the house's original footprint while raising ceilings, expanding windows, carving out bedrooms, and catapulating the facade into the current century. "Because of the constraints, we ended up with a more interesting—and less generic—house than if we'd started from scratch," she says.

Before: Kitchen



Before: Kitchen

Courtesy of Jennifer Weiss Architecture
Photo: Casper/Casper creative, table, dining, island, cabinet, modern, kitchen, white, cabinet

After: Kitchen



Formerly cut off from the rest of the home, the kitchen now looks into the living room. When the Fines have parties, it's set up as a bar. The pendants hanging over the island are by Ingo Maurer.

Photo: Lucas Flitzhalm
Photo: Casper/Casper creative, kitchen, medium, hardwood, floor, white, cabinet, refrigerator, modern, kitchen, room, hood, undermount, sink, pendant, lighting, menu, dishwasher, metal, cabinet



Dinnerware and linens by Heath Ceramics outfit the kitchen, which also has a range and dishwasher by Thermador, range hood by Zephyr, refrigerator by Jennair, and faucets by Grohe. On sunny days, the glass backsplash reflects the garden.

Photo: Lucas Flitzhalm
Photo: Casper/Casper creative, table, dining, medium, hardwood, floor, white, cabinet, modern, kitchen, refrigerator, sink

On the main floor, surgical cuts created an open flow around the kitchen, formerly marooned behind a series of rooms that also blocked the garden. The Art Deco-inspired stair rail, designed by Ed's mother, was preserved, as was one of the Moorish-style arches. Upstairs, Ed's childhood bedroom, now the master suite, was transformed from a dormer Warren with tiny windows and a ceiling that peaked at six-and-a-half feet into an expansive suite with a wrapping wall of glass and views of the city, bay, and three bridges. An outdoor porch, often swathed in fog, was enclosed and reborn as a guestroom.

Before: Upstairs Hall



Before: Upstairs hall

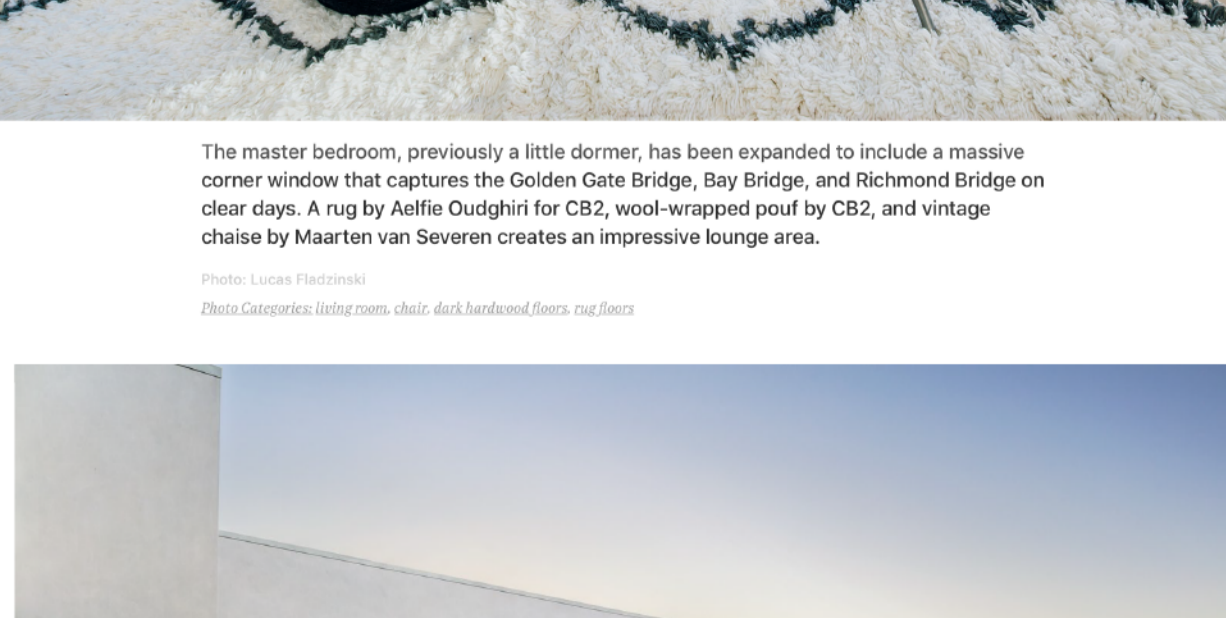
Courtesy of Jennifer Weiss Architecture
Photo: Casper/Casper creative, hallway, medium, hardwood, floor

After: Upstairs Hall



Jennifer Weiss Architecture designed a custom storage unit and reading nook, which also enjoys a corner window. This second-floor space is now a hub of activity and gathering place for the family.

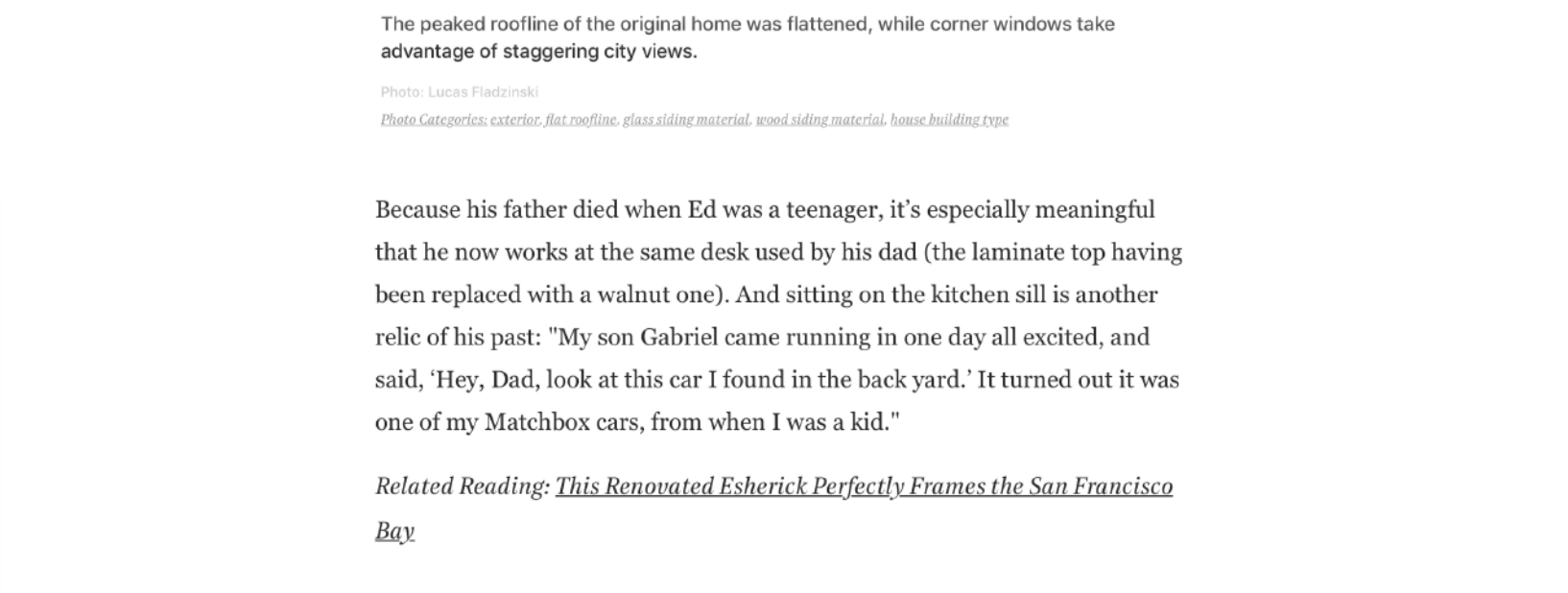
Photo: Lucas Flitzhalm
Photo: Casper/Casper creative, hallway, medium, hardwood, floor



An ironing board folds out from the side of a built-in bookcase. The pillow is custom-made from vintage Hudson Bay Company blankets.

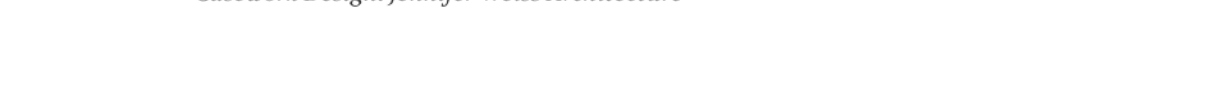
Photo: Lucas Flitzhalm
Photo: Casper/Casper creative, hallway, medium, hardwood, floor

After: Master Bedroom



The master bedroom, previously a little dormer, has been expanded to include a massive corner window that captures the Golden Gate Bridge, Bay Bridge, and Richmond Bridge on clear days. A rug by Aelfie Oudghiri for CB2, wool-wrapped pouf by CB2, and vintage chaise by Maarten van Severen creates an impressive lounge area.

Photo: Lucas Flitzhalm
Photo: Casper/Casper creative, chair, dark, hardwood, floor, rug, floor



The peaked roofline of the original home was flattened, while corner windows take advantage of staggering city views.

Photo: Lucas Flitzhalm
Photo: Casper/Casper creative, hot, modern, glass, white, material, wood, white, modern, house, building, row

Because his father died when Ed was a teenager, it's especially meaningful that he now works at the same desk used by his dad (the laminate top having been replaced with a walnut one). And sitting on the kitchen sill is another relic of his past: "My son Gabriel came running in one day all excited, and said, 'Hey, Dad, look at this car I found in the back yard.' It turned out it was one of my Matchbox cars, from when I was a kid."

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Project Credits:

Architect: [Jennifer Weiss Architecture](#) / [@jennifer_weiss_architecture](#)

Builder: [Farallon Construction](#)

Structural Engineer: [Holmes Structures](#)

Lighting Design: [Jennifer Weiss Architecture](#)

Interior Design: [Jennifer Weiss Architecture](#)

Casework Design: [Jennifer Weiss Architecture](#)