

advertisement | your ad here

home of the

Subscribe to the weekend Chronicle

SEARCH

SFGate

Web Search by YAHOO!

Advanced Search

Sign In | Register

Home & Design Garden Style SFIS Outdoors Ski & Snow Health Green Gay & Lesbian Magazine Moms Pets

## DESIGN Designing Duo

### A Potrero Hill loft is home to a collecting couple

Zahid Sardar

Sunday, February 20, 2005

PRINT

E-MAIL

SHARE

COMMENTS (0)

FONT | SIZE: - +

"We have the best of both worlds here," says designer Peter Stathis, a former director at Cranbrook Academy of Art, the famed modernist school outside Detroit. Stathis and his wife, interior designer Suzette Sherman, left Cranbrook for the Bay Area four years ago. They were unprepared for San Francisco's small scale, which belies its sizable reputation around the world.

#### IMAGES



View More Images

"At first I thought it wouldn't be a place I'd enjoy. It seemed too content. But luckily, we found a home to live in on Potrero Hill. It has a mix of commercial and residential spaces," Stathis says. "We can live in a loft and still have a neighborhood of homes around us."

Stathis and Sherman, both in their 40s, had found a loft -- a photographer's edgy live-work space -- that reminded them of New York City, where they met. Sherman enjoys classical design as well as a full-tilt modernism (the old-fashioned heirlooms in the loft are hers), and the couple found ways to collaborate on the design of the interior.

Stathis, a product developer who licenses his designs to companies such as Steelcase, Herman Miller and Knoll, finds that collaboration is his stock-in-trade. A sleek water cooler he created with San Francisco architect Chris Deam went to Lola, a Canadian company. Other clients include Bay Area home accessories companies Offi and Pablo. An update of a 1950s classic folding TV tray available at Urban Outfitters was a collaboration with designer Heather McGill. Stathis also developed silver jewelry, crystal and glassware marketed by Nambe.

Now, Stathis has made another career move as a furniture showroom coordinator at Arkitektura, in San Francisco. "I deal with the physical aspect of the showroom ... its look and feel," he says. His new design work neatly overlaps Sherman's interior design world.

Stathis knew Arkitektura owner Andrew Fisher, another emigre from Michigan, who convinced him, after a reunion dinner, to join the company. Just in time, it seems, for Stathis and Sherman had begun their remodel.

Minotti rugs, lamps by artist Ingo Maurer and Fontana Arte lights from Arkitektura joined their own collection of vintage modernist furniture and objects gathered while they lived in Cranbrook.

"That area was the hub of modernism in the 1950s but such furniture had fallen out of favor by the '70s and '80s," says Stathis who found Saarinen, Bertoia, Eames and Knoll pieces quite affordable 15 years ago. "Because of that, we have so many unusual pieces."

"The Giancarlo Piretti Plia folding chairs from Castelli are an old (1969) design but still



advertisement | your ad here

MOST COMMENTED MOST READ MOST E-MAILED

1. 'Sit/lie' law needed to stop bullies on Haight
2. 101 reasons why men cheat (Tiger Woods Edition). The timeless question...
3. PG&E fixes lower-, upper-tier users' imbalance
4. Alameda police dog bites cop, is shot to death
5. Bengals try to return focus to field
6. The 10 most awesome albums of 2009 Also, the 25 best songs, all guaranteed...
7. Eroding cliff prompts Pacifica evacuation

TopHomes

From Prudential - California

#### CALPINE

2 BR / 1.0 BA  
\$365,000.00

#### CARNELIAN BAY

4 BR / 2.1 BA  
\$888,000.00

#### KINGS BEACH

3 BR / 2.0 BA  
\$395,000.00

#### KINGS BEACH

5 BR / 3.1 BA  
\$1,295,000.00

#### KINGS BEACH

3 BR / 3.1 BA  
\$2,950,000.00

#### TRUCKEE

5 BR / 5.1 BA  
\$2,699,000.00

#### TAHOE CITY

4 BR / 2.1 BA  
\$850,000.00

#### HOMEWOOD

3 BR / 2.0 BA  
\$487,500.00

#### KINGS BEACH

4 BR / 3.0 BA  
\$1,200,000.00

#### KINGS BEACH

5 BR / 5.1 BA  
\$6,750,000.00

See more from this broker



About Top Homes

#### REAL ESTATE



#### Albion Castle

This Norman-style castle is believed to be built from stones used as ballast for ships sailing into San Francisco to load up on gold.

available," Stathis says. Even a recent dinner guest who happens to work for the company didn't know that.

The couple's disparate collection works because they both agree that only those things they both like can go on display. The couple worked on a layout to fit in their eclectic furniture collection and were pleased to find that few spatial changes had to be made. Only the floor needed serious refinishing.

"We inherited all the rooms and the kitchen," Stathis says. The photographer's darkroom was restored to its original use, a bathroom that Sherman painted inky blue. Its uncovered skylight once again lets in daylight, and Stathis had the satisfaction of building a few free-standing walls that shield the pantry, a closet and their bedroom from view. The overhead lighting suited them, but not the faux finish marble walls the former tenant used as a backdrop. "We covered it up with Sheetrock," almost as soon as the long-term lease was signed, Stathis says. Sherman then painted the walls white and sanded the old fir floors and sealed them.

"We added volumes but we played off existing conditions," Stathis says. "The former tenants had made many good decisions," he says, and they adhered to them. The long 5-foot-wide entry hall simply "adds a grander gesture," he says. New electrical conduits also remain exposed in the spirit of the original loft.

But their informal new space couldn't match their 10-room Michigan home in scale, and much of their collection had to be sold. "We just couldn't fit it all in," Stathis says. "Besides, in a loft you have visual collision. Big black objects and busy textile panels had to go. What remains are large vintage pieces and contemporary artwork including objects by Verner Panton, Victor Vasarely and Jeff Koons that they couldn't part with. Different lighting effects were achieved with dimmers and well-positioned lamps. "We even had our Christmas tree on dimmers," Sherman says.

Mixed in among their treasures are also "a lot of strategically placed Ikea products," Stathis says and then the avowed modernist makes another confession. "Our dream home lies in Sea Ranch." It's surprising because Sherman also grew up in a modernist household and went to a Bauhaus-style design school in Cincinnati. "We really enjoy it. Living lightly on the land," he says of its rustic, weather-beaten aesthetic.

Until they can move to the increasingly wild pleasures of Sea Ranch, they inhabit a residence that provides open spaces indoors. Off the entry hallway, two guest rooms that serve as storage, offices or simply spaces where they can shut the door every night on three Bengal and African leopard cats, help preserve the illusion.

Rooms, especially storage rooms, do appeal to Sherman. "We love objects, and we have a lot of stuff," she says. "We mix old and new and baroque and more modernist things. We both have to like and live with our objects," Sherman says. But not everything can be displayed.

"When you are two designers," she says, "you simply have to negotiate."

*Zahid Sardar is The Chronicle design editor. E-mail him at [zsardar@sfcchronicle.com](mailto:zsardar@sfcchronicle.com).*

*This article appeared on page CM - 24 of the San Francisco Chronicle*



Subscribe to the San Francisco Chronicle and get a gift:

- Sunday + a \$15 gift card
- Fri-Sun + a \$15 gift card
- Mon-Sun + a \$25 gift card

Select an offer

PRINT E-MAIL SHARE

[\(0\) View Comments »](#)

Be the first to share your thoughts on this story.

Add Your Comment

City to get Treasure Island for \$105 million  
Bad economy hits 'real' housewives  
[Search our Open Home Guide](#)

**Featured Property**



2311 Broadway St.  
SAN FRANCISCO  
\$6,950,000  
7 Beds, 5.1 Bath  
Coldwell Banker  
[More Properties](#)

[Search Real Estate »](#)

**CARS**



**Only L.A. has worse roads than Bay Area**  
Bay Area drivers, accustomed to bone-rattling, alignment-battering commutes, probably won't...

[Gravel is making a comeback](#)  
[Cash for Clunkers Calculator](#)  
[Ford Mustang is still cool after all these years](#)

**Featured Vehicle**



2008 Volvo S80  
\$35,675  
Lawrence Volvo  
[Details](#) | [Similar Cars](#)

[Search Cars »](#)

**JOBS**



**Activists protest bonuses from large banks**  
Labor and activist groups rallied outside a Well Fargo branch in San Francisco's Financial District...

[Find a job in Banking](#)  
[Laid-off Wall Streeters take stock, start fresh](#)  
[Confessions of a House Painter](#)

[Search Jobs »](#)



2006 Honda Civic LX  
Coupe 2D - (510)  
943-8997



50 RG6 RCA/Component  
Compression Connector  
Green



CHRISTMAS PUPPIES



Affordable Math Tutoring

[Browse ads](#) | [Place an ad »](#)

advertisement | your ad here

home of the

Subscribe to the weekend Chronicle

SEARCH

SFGate

Web Search by

YAHOO!

Advanced Search

Sign In | Register

Home & Design Garden Style SFIS Outdoors Ski & Snow Health Green Gay & Lesbian Magazine Moms Pets

## DESIGN / Designing Duo / A Potrero Hill loft is home to a collecting couple

« Back to Article | Buy Photos | More Photo Galleries

1 of 5



Massimiliano Bolzonella

Suzette Sherman and Peter Stathis' living room showcases 1971 white Vecta fiberglass chairs. The 1970s coffee table is by Paul Mayan, and an acrylic sculpture from the Harry Bertoia estate is placed near a 1971 Marilyn Monroe poster from the Tate, signed by Andy Warhol. Rug by Minotti is from Arkitektura. Photo by Massimiliano Bolzonella

Photo: MASSIMILIANO BOLZONELLA / Freelance

E-MAIL SHARE COMMENTS (0)



(0) View Comments »

Be the first to share your thoughts on this story.

Add Your Comment

You must be signed in to add a comment. [Sign In](#) | [Register](#)

Submit

### More Galleries

1-3 of 21



Movie premiere: 'Avatar'



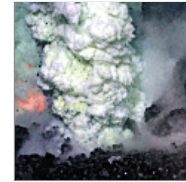
A castle in Hunters Point



Castle by Hunters Point

advertisement | your ad here

### Most Commented Photo



Undersea eruption seen, recorded for first time

[View Photo](#)  
[View Comments](#)

MOST COMMENTED MOST READ MOST E-MAILED

1. 'Sit/lie' law needed to stop bullies on Haight
2. 101 reasons why men cheat (Tiger Woods Edition). The timeless question...
3. PG&E fixes lower-, upper-tier users' imbalance
4. Alameda police dog bites cop, is shot to death
5. Bengals try to return focus to field
6. The 10 most awesome albums of 2009 Also, the 25 best songs, all guaranteed...
7. Eroding cliff prompts Pacifica evacuation

advertisement | your ad here

advertisement | your ad here

home of the

Subscribe to the weekend Chronicle

SEARCH

SFGate

Web Search by YAHOO!

Advanced Search

Sign In | Register

Home & Design Garden Style SFIS Outdoors Ski & Snow Health Green Gay & Lesbian Magazine Moms Pets

## DESIGN / Designing Duo / A Potrero Hill loft is home to a collecting couple

« Back to Article | Buy Photos | More Photo Galleries

2 of 5



Massimiliano Bolzonella

Entry hall's Lite Light lamp etched into a mirror is by Peter Stathis. A red textile panel on the far wall, "Decor 1, Square" from 1969, is by Verner Panton. Doors lead to spare rooms. Photo by Massimiliano Bolzonella

Photo: MASSIMILIANO BOLZONELLA / Freelance

E-MAIL SHARE COMMENTS (0)



(0) View Comments »

Be the first to share your thoughts on this story.

Add Your Comment

You must be signed in to add a comment. Sign In | Register

Submit

### More Galleries

1-3 of 21



Movie premiere: 'Avatar'



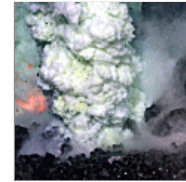
A castle in Hunters Point



Castle by Hunters Point

advertisement | your ad here

### Most Commented Photo



Undersea eruption seen, recorded for first time

View Photo View Comments

MOST COMMENTED MOST READ MOST E-MAILED

1. 'Sit/lie' law needed to stop bullies on Haight
2. 101 reasons why men cheat (Tiger Woods Edition). The timeless question...
3. PG&E fixes lower-, upper-tier users' imbalance
4. Alameda police dog bites cop, is shot to death
5. Bengals try to return focus to field
6. The 10 most awesome albums of 2009 Also, the 25 best songs, all guaranteed...
7. Eroding cliff prompts Pacifica evacuation

advertisement | your ad here

advertisement | your ad here

home of the

Subscribe to the weekend Chronicle

SEARCH

SFGate

Web Search by

YAHOO!

Advanced Search

Sign In | Register

Home & Design Garden Style SFIS Outdoors Ski & Snow Health Green Gay & Lesbian Magazine Moms Pets

## DESIGN / Designing Duo / A Potrero Hill loft is home to a collecting couple

« Back to Article | Buy Photos | More Photo Galleries

3 of 5

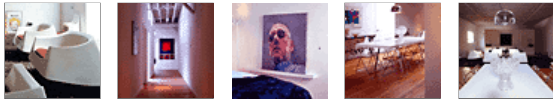


Massimiliano Bolzonella

In the bedroom alcove, a vitine contains Sherman's wedding bouquet. The self-portrait is by her father, Roger Sherman. 1984 lights are YaYaHo by IngoMaurer. Pipistrello floor lamp by Gae Aulenti, was manufactured in 1965 by Martinelli. Photo by Massimiliano Bolzonella

Photo: MASSIMILIANO BOLZONELLA / Freelance

E-MAIL SHARE COMMENTS (0)



(0) View Comments »

Be the first to share your thoughts on this story.

Add Your Comment

You must be signed in to add a comment. [Sign In](#) | [Register](#)

Submit

### More Galleries

1-3 of 21



Movie premiere: 'Avatar'



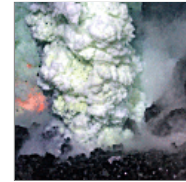
A castle in Hunters Point



Castle by Hunters Point

advertisement | your ad here

### Most Commented Photo



Undersea eruption seen, recorded for first time

[View Photo](#)  
[View Comments](#)

MOST COMMENTED

MOST READ

MOST E-MAILED

1. 'Sit/lie' law needed to stop bullies on Haight
2. 101 reasons why men cheat (Tiger Woods Edition). The timeless question...
3. PG&E fixes lower-, upper-tier users' imbalance
4. Alameda police dog bites cop, is shot to death
5. Bengals try to return focus to field
6. The 10 most awesome albums of 2009 Also, the 25 best songs, all guaranteed...
7. Eroding cliff prompts Pacifica evacuation

advertisement | your ad here

advertisement | your ad here

home of the

Subscribe to the weekend Chronicle

SEARCH

SFGate

Web Search by YAHOO!

Advanced Search

Sign In | Register

Home & Design Garden Style SFIS Outdoors Ski & Snow Health Green Gay & Lesbian Magazine Moms Pets

# DESIGN / Designing Duo / A Potrero Hill loft is home to a collecting couple

« Back to Article | Buy Photos | More Photo Galleries

4 of 5



Massimiliano Bolzonella

Past a 1969 red panel by Vernor Panton is the dining area. Vintage Plia folding chairs are paired with a table by Stathis. Photo by Massimiliano Bolzonella

Photo: MASSIMILIANO BOLZONELLA / Freelance

E-MAIL SHARE COMMENTS (0)



(0) View Comments »

Be the first to share your thoughts on this story.

Add Your Comment

You must be signed in to add a comment. Sign In | Register

Submit

### More Galleries

1-3 of 21



Movie premiere: 'Avatar'



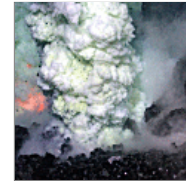
A castle in Hunters Point



Castle by Hunters Point

advertisement | your ad here

### Most Commented Photo



Undersea eruption seen, recorded for first time

View Photo View Comments

MOST COMMENTED MOST READ MOST E-MAILED

1. 'Sit/lie' law needed to stop bullies on Haight
2. 101 reasons why men cheat (Tiger Woods Edition). The timeless question...
3. PG&E fixes lower-, upper-tier users' imbalance
4. Alameda police dog bites cop, is shot to death
5. Bengals try to return focus to field
6. The 10 most awesome albums of 2009 Also, the 25 best songs, all guaranteed...
7. Eroding cliff prompts Pacifica evacuation

advertisement | your ad here

advertisement | your ad here

home of the

Subscribe to the weekend Chronicle

SEARCH

SFGate

Web Search by

YAHOO!

Advanced Search

Sign In | Register

Home & Design Garden Style SFIS Outdoors Ski & Snow Health Green Gay & Lesbian Magazine Moms Pets

## DESIGN / Designing Duo / A Potrero Hill loft is home to a collecting couple

« Back to Article | Buy Photos | More Photo Galleries

5 of 5



Massimiliano Bolzonella

The curved Arco lamp is by Achille Castiglioni from Flos. The crystal Liberty Punch Bowl is an 1876 Philadelphia Centennial heirloom. Photo by Massimiliano Bolzonella

Photo: MASSIMILIANO BOLZONELLA / Freelance

E-MAIL SHARE COMMENTS (0)



(0) View Comments »

Be the first to share your thoughts on this story.

Add Your Comment

You must be signed in to add a comment. Sign In | Register

Submit

### More Galleries

1-3 of 21



Movie premiere: 'Avatar'



A castle in Hunters Point



Castle by Hunters Point

advertisement | your ad here

### Most Commented Photo



Undersea eruption seen, recorded for first time

View Photo View Comments

MOST COMMENTED MOST READ MOST E-MAILED

1. 'Sit/lie' law needed to stop bullies on Haight
2. 101 reasons why men cheat (Tiger Woods Edition). The timeless question...
3. PG&E fixes lower-, upper-tier users' imbalance
4. Alameda police dog bites cop, is shot to death
5. Bengals try to return focus to field
6. The 10 most awesome albums of 2009 Also, the 25 best songs, all guaranteed...
7. Christian Scientists seek prayer provision

advertisement | your ad here