

MODERN LUXURY

Silicon Valley

STELLA & DOT'S
**JESSICA
HERRIN**

HOW A BUSINESS-
SCHOOL DROPOUT
BUILT A MULTIMILLION-
DOLLAR STYLE EMPIRE



The HOME DESIGN Issue

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OF INDOOR-OUTDOOR ARCHITECTURE

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ON THE COVER
Stella & Dot CEO and founder Jessica Herrin in her Hillsborough home
Photography: Cody Pickens
Interior design: Kendall Wilkinson Design

In the dining area adjacent to the family room and kitchen, a Charles Arnaldi work presides over a table and barrel-shaped chairs by Swaim, as well as a trio of LightArt pendant lamps.



CALM,
COOL &
COLLECTED

In Hillsborough, a couple's airy abode is filled with cherished art and contemporary decor.

By Anh-Minh Le // Portrait by Angela DeCenzo // Interior photography by Bernard André

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rowing up on the Peninsula and in the South Bay, Steven Rice figured that of the five kids in his family, he would be the one to leave the region. “I had a feeling growing up that there was more to experience outside of the Bay Area,” he says, noting that Silicon Valley was not as diverse back in the ’60s and ’70s. Yet, after traveling around the globe for various jobs, Rice has developed a deeper appreciation for the Valley and stuck around—and none of his siblings have. Not that he hasn’t had the chance to leave: His current role as the chief human resources officer for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation requires spending part of the workweek in Seattle. Still, he adds, “I’m the only one who hung around the old stomping grounds.”

Rice and his husband, Gary Steele, have lived in Hillsborough for nearly two decades. In 2014, following a two-year search, they purchased an 8,000-square-foot residence situated on 2 acres. “We were trying to find a home that is a single story, planning ahead for when we get older—so no stairs,” Rice recalls. “And we have this affinity for artwork, and trying to find spaces that hold it well is really hard.” The property was “a classic pocket listing where you need to know someone,” he continues. “We saw the ceilings. We saw the footprint and said, ‘OK. This is absolutely for us.’ But we knew it needed love and care and help.”

Indeed, the history of the house had yielded some dubious choices. According to Rice, it started out life in the late 1950s as a traditional ranch-style, and over the decades, several additions were completed. “Then one of the owners basically almost burned it down to the ground, and when they reconstructed it, they mashed together different architectural styles. It’s a contemporary, French chateau, Mediterranean,” says Rice.

The couple brought in architect Randy Grange and interior designer Leslie Lamarre, the husband-and-wife founders of San Mateo-based TRG Architects (trgarch.com). “Our initial impression was: ‘Wow, great location, nice lot, nice high ceilings, lots of glass,’” says Lamarre. “But

otherwise: ‘What were [Rice and Steele] thinking?’ Everything on the inside of the house needed to be changed.” It didn’t take long, though, for she and Grange to understand their clients’ vision. “It’s superhigh ceilings and vast expanses of walls in generous rooms were perfectly suited for showcasing their art collection,” says Grange.

Rice and Steele’s ability to make decisions quickly allowed for a major interior overhaul and substantial upgrades to the home’s infrastructure in about 16 months. “Forward movement is better than pondering for us,” says Rice. Lamarre was responsible for “everything that’s attached to the house,” as she puts it, and the “soft finishes”—furnishings and accents—were Rice’s domain. During his earlier employment at Hewlett-Packard, thanks to the company’s educational reimbursement program, Rice had studied interior design and art at San Jose State University. “I’m one of those weird individuals,” he says with a smile. “While I work in a business environment—tech firms for 30-plus years—my second passion has been design.”

Those soaring ceilings that helped sell the homeowners on the property range from about 12 to 14 feet, and invite statement pieces such as large-scale art and lighting. “One perfect example is the Greg Miller piece in the living room that Steven loves,” says Grange, referring to “True,” a 108-by-132-inch mixed media work. “There’s no way this would sit well on the wall of a typical living room.” In the family room, Rice opted for a chandelier by Seattle-based LightArt that consists of two outside interlocking rings. “We needed something to bring the height of the ceiling down, without being solid,” he explains. “It adds some grounding and dimension.” The fireplace surround features floor-to-

ceiling tile work: Lamarre selected Artistic Tile’s Ambra Gris, a handcarved sandstone that provides a sense of movement. Artist Charles Arnoldi’s colorful “No Time to Lose” also takes pride of place in the space.

In addition to Arnoldi and Miller, among Rice and Steele’s favorite artists are Ed Moses and Ed Ruscha, whose paintings grace the walls throughout their home. “Gary is the art person,” says Rice. “He finds the amazing art, and it’s my job get it placed in the house. It’s a team effort.” The pair is constantly looking to add to their collection. On a recent trip to Europe, Steele was snapping and sending photos of potential acquisitions



Homeowner Steven Rice with Penny, a soft-coated wheaten terrier, in the family room, which includes a Charles Arnoldi painting



Clockwise from left: The spacious master closet, which was designed by TRG and fabricated by Poliform, features cenere oak melamine cabinetry; in a powder room, a glass chandelier by Ochre casts a dramatic shadow on the ceiling, and a Christopher Martin painting injects a colorful note; in the laundry room—decked out in cabinetry built by American Woodworking, blue AKDO tiles and quartz countertops—“the doggie sink was a key component (i.e., mandatory),” says designer Leslie Lamarre.



to Rice. “All week, I’m getting pictures: ‘What do you think about this? Where would you put this?’” Rice recounts. “Luckily, we have similar likes around artwork, so it makes it easy for us to agree, decide and move forward.”

The kitchen, previously one of the smallest rooms in the house, underwent the most construction. “I am especially proud of the kitchen,” enthuses Lamarre, “as it was a huge transformation and involved some innovative design elements.” Gone are the faux stone columns that served as a base for a peninsula and the cherry wood cabinetry that stopped well short of the ceiling (leaving several feet of wasted space). Now, Rice and Steele have an award-winning gourmet kitchen appointed with clean-lined cabinetry and a stunning backsplash comprised of handcut mosaics by Oceanside Glasstile. Adhering to the axiom of “a place for everything and everything in its place,” the kitchen is remarkably clutter-free; even the outlets are hidden and pop up only when needed. The marble countertops are clear, save for a few vintage McCoy Pottery cookie jars, a sampling of Rice’s collection. “It’s always to the chagrin of Gary that a box arrives from eBay,” Rice jokes. “Another cookie jar!?”

In addition to a bigger, well-organized kitchen, a closet that could accommodate at least 240 linear square feet of hanging storage was a post-renovation must-have. Hence, off of the Lamarre-designed master bath, a closet shared by Rice and Steele includes two tiers of hanging space behind glass, along with plenty of drawers and shelves. The master

bedroom exudes relaxation, which was a priority, given the homeowners’ busy schedules. “The shape of the bed, with its curved-in headboard and warm brown leather, was selected specifically to create a sense of being surrounded in a calming environment,” says Rice.

On Monday mornings, usually on a 6AM flight, Rice decamps to Seattle for work. No doubt, it can be tough to leave the Hillsborough house, not to mention its occupants—Steele and the couple’s 10-year-old soft-coated wheaten terrier, Penny (“The world revolves around her,” says Rice). Their Peninsula town, as well as neighboring downtown Burlingame, are also big pulls. “There’s a strong sense of community and relationship that I think is unique and special about living here,” Rice observes. “I know that California and the Bay Area is my home; it’s where I belong.” ■

“We saw the ceilings. We saw the footprint and said, ‘OK. This is absolutely for us.’ But we knew it needed love and care and help.”

-STEVEN RICE, HOMEOWNER



Clockwise from top left: The bedroom includes an Oly light fixture, Phillip Jeffries grass-cloth wallcovering and rug by Tufenkian (the maker of all the rugs in the house); the TRG-designed and Downsview-fabricated kitchen pairs dark cabinetry (vertical grain white oak veneer), light cabinetry (taupe lacquer), Calacatta Oro marble countertops from Pietra Fina and Artemide lighting; the foyer is appointed with a Lolli e Memmoli chandelier and Charles Arnoldi painting; the living room's paneled-glass chandelier and sconces are by Shakúff, while Arnoldi pieces flank the Nero Seta marble-clad fireplace.

