

THIS PAGE: FAMILY TIME WITH BENJAMIN, CRYSTAL AND ANDREW PALECEK IN THE LIVING ROOM **OPPOSITE:** A PERSONAL FAVORITE OF CRYSTAL'S, A NEUTRAL JUJU HEADDRESS



STORY BY ABIGAIL STONE | PHOTOGRAPHY BY AUBRIE PICK

HOUSE OF STYLE

DESIGN POWER COUPLE, *CRYSTAL AND ANDREW PALECEK* OPEN THE DOORS TO THEIR SAN FRANCISCO PIED À TERRE

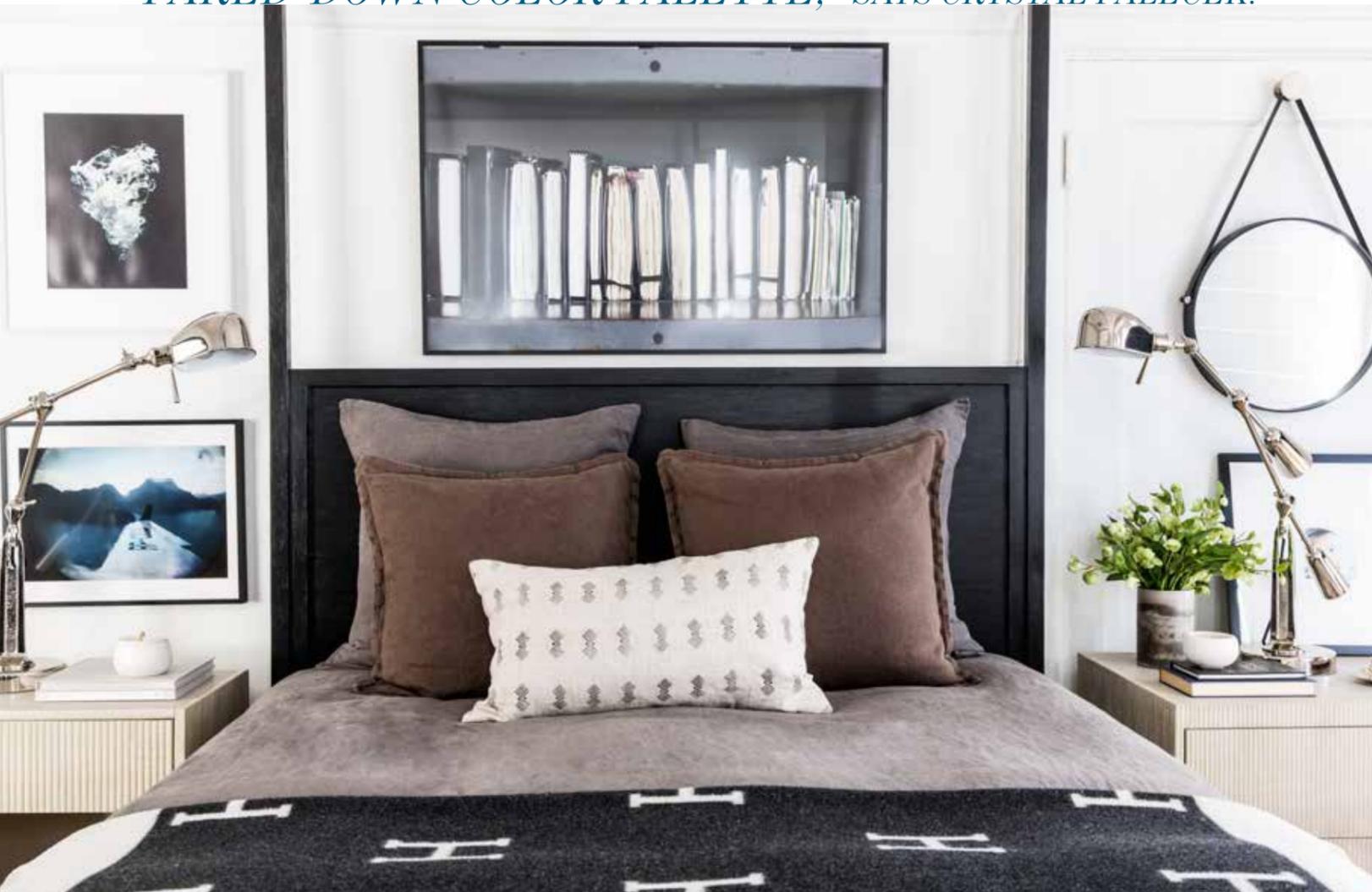
FOR SIX YEARS, ANDREW PALECEK lived in a self-described bachelor pad. The cozy one-bedroom apartment is a block from bustling Fillmore Street in the heart of San Francisco's Marina district; a perfect location for hot bars, hip food, and a convenient weekday commute across the Golden Gate Bridge to his family's eponymous design business, located in Richmond. His sophisticated take on single living—more masculine fashion than man cave—got a significant style shift when he met and married Crystal Gentilello, the founder and editor-in-chief of Rue, an online hub for interior design and lifestyle inspiration.

Their first real-life introduction was one of those auspicious coincidences that only ever seems to happen in rom-coms. The two had previously exchanged casual emails—Andrew was interested in a media kit to advertise on Rue—before Gentilello moved from Chicago to San Francisco. Once there, they ended up at the same restaurant at the same time; he recognized her; and the question “Are you

Crystal from Rue?” led to a relatively quick love connection.

They didn't move in together until after they got married, and over the course of their first year as husband and wife, Gentilello assumed a domestic role similar to the one she had also established for herself at Rue: lead editor, with a distinct creative vision. They agreed that she would have the freedom to redecorate his—now their—place, but the process was a gradual shift that embodied a kind of mutual respect and simpatico give and take. She opened him up to new materials; he helped her pay attention to small but important quality details and the finer points of production like hinges, joinery, and stitches. As a pair, they elevated their collective sense of style and saw it evolve into something that became comfortable for both of them in their shared abode. Ultimately, a wall-mounted deer head and two mid-century chairs, some of the first he designed for Palecek before the most recent modern boom, were all that remained from his bachelor days.

“I LIKE TO LIVE WITH NEUTRALS AND A PARED-DOWN COLOR PALETTE,” SAYS CRYSTAL PALECEK.



After periods of experimentation with apartments past—like dark, moody walls in one that she loved until she didn't—Gentilello found her balance point with Palecek. “I like to live with neutrals and a pared-down color palette,” she says. “Our place now is like my style resting point.”

She had no shortage of inspiration coming from the digital pages of her publication. Rue introduces her to incredible photographers, from whom she's sourced and purchased some of the oversize photography adorning the walls—including a camel being led across a hazy southern California horizon by Jose Villa above the TV and a provocative black-and-white shot of a woman's body with small strips of tape applied along the shoulder and back by Nicole Cohen in the dining nook, where they eat their meals. She also looks to Pinterest, Instagram, and the work of individual designers—such as Darryl Carter in Washington D.C., who is still a fave—for additional ideas. Palecek finds travel, including his regular trips to his professional producers and suppliers in Asia, to be a constant source of intrigue and influence. Bookshelves are stocked with the requisite arts and design hardcovers and monographs, as well as some softcover favorites like Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist* and Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat Pray Love*.

Despite the constant stream of exciting possibilities and new concepts, the pair intentionally kept things minimal at home, only incorporating pieces with which they have an aesthetic or personal connection, and even those could, and do, change regularly. “I'm always editing,” Gentilello says of the almost monthly rotation of small goods and furniture, much of which is from Andrew's own company, that make their way into—and back out of—their space. “The more edited my home is, the clearer my emotions and mind.” Knickknacks are arranged sparingly, as if everything is photo-shoot ready, with a keen attention to order.

For someone so in tune with what surrounds her, it's not surprising to know that Gentilello is an active acolyte of Marie Kondo's organizational movement and its accompanying, *The Life Changing Magic of Tidying Up*. “I really do believe that every single thing you own should spark joy,” she says. Yet she's open to the reality that those emotions may evolve over time. In this way, she doesn't get too attached to anything that cycles through. “It's easy for me to let that stuff go,” Gentilello says.

One thing that has been a major, enduring development is the birth of their son, Benjamin, about a year and a half ago. Being parents has changed their lives in numerous ways, but for the most part, not their apartment. Benjamin is

THIS PAGE: THE SERENA & LILY SOFA PROVIDES A PERFECT SPOT TO LOUNGE IN THE LIVING ROOM, BESIDE PALECEK'S BROCKTON COFFEE TABLE, AND BENEATH AN ARTERIORS HARDING CHANDELIER, WHILE A FEATHERED JUJU HAT FROM ST. FRANK PROVIDES A WALL-MOUNTED SOFT SPOT. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** IN THE BEDROOM, CRYSTAL AND ANDREW RETIRE AT NIGHT TO A SPIRO FOUR-POSTER BED BY TRITTER FEEFER.





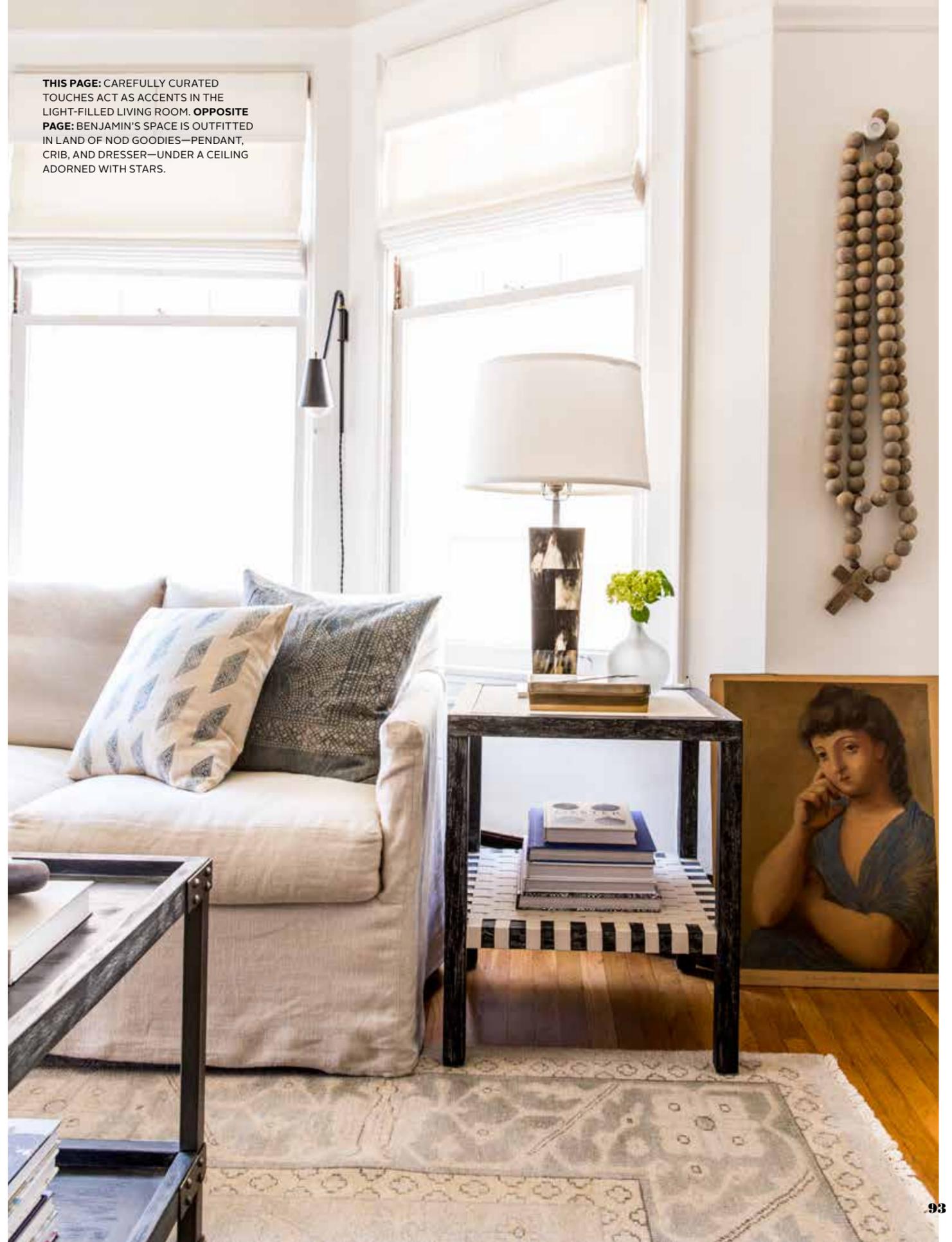
a growing boy—smiling and curious and laughing and walking and touching—and he has no shortage of brightly colored toys to play with during the day. (Gentilello currently works from home.) After bedtime, however, those toys are gathered up and stowed in the corner of the living room; within reach, but out of the way. “Our place is too small to not keep things neat,” she explains.

And other changes are in progress as well. After spending the last six years seeing Rue expand and evolve, Gentilello is embarking upon an endeavor that’s a logical next step for someone whose own style has already influenced others so much. Though she’s forever fielded casual requests from friends and family to help out with interior decorating and redesigns, she’s decided to make it official and start offering consultations for clients who are hoping to capture some of the Palecek-Gentilello spark in their own places. She is currently taking care of, and tirelessly documenting, her parents’ renovation in nearby Tiburon and putting together a portfolio website; soon, she’ll be promoting a range of services.

It’s quite an impressive progression for a woman whose love for interiors began with a modest blog nearly a decade ago, but Gentilello has never been afraid to follow her dreams. “She’s fearless,” Andrew Palecek says. “When you’re passionate about something, there is no fear,” she says. “When you’re doing what you love, it just feels like breathing.”



THIS PAGE: CAREFULLY CURATED TOUCHES ACT AS ACCENTS IN THE LIGHT-FILLED LIVING ROOM. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** BENJAMIN’S SPACE IS OUTFITTED IN LAND OF NOD GOODIES—PENDANT, CRIB, AND DRESSER—UNDER A CEILING ADORNED WITH STARS.



“THE MORE EDITED MY HOME IS, THE CLEARER MY EMOTIONS AND MIND.”

