

ARCHITECT OF SERENITY

IRIT AXELROD
AXELROD ARCHITECTS, SAN FRANCISCO

As a native of Tel Aviv, Irit Axelrod grew up surrounded by Modernist buildings on every corner, designed by Bauhaus-trained architects that had fled Nazi Germany. "I loved their pure form," says Axelrod. "In my own work, I'm trying to create that sense of simple, quiet space—the place you return to at the end of a hectic day."

After a successful 12-year career in Israel, Axelrod moved in 2005 to San Francisco, where she opened a second office. Here, she continues to work on the high-end residences and sleek commercial interiors that were the staples of her Tel Aviv practice. The common thread is a disciplined black-and-white palette and industrial sensibility. In her own apartment in the Clocktower Lofts, which has been selected for the San Francisco AIA's home tours this September, she took out all the woodwork, stripping the space down to reveal the original concrete floor, duct work and sprinkler system, before adding her own elements. "I think of buildings as containers for the life within, so I used freestanding partitions instead of walls," she says.

Rather than temper interior spaces with color, Axelrod prefers graphic elements, such as an oversize "H20" on the shower glass and a bicycle pattern in the room of her two-year-old son. "My architecture is very serious, so the graphics are a way to add a bit of humor," says Axelrod, whose adherence to form following function is paying off for her on a practical level. "All that open space is great for kids, since they can run around and you can still keep an eye on them," she laughs.

