

# bathspa

firm: **jun ho**  
site: **san francisco**

**come  
fly  
away**

*In reception at Revel Spa, antique Thai birdcages hang from planks of reclaimed oak, above a desk built with the same wood.*

**From the sidewalk** outside Revel Spa, a cluster of black birdcages can be seen hovering above the reception desk. The desk also floats on a narrow pedestal, creating a sense that all the objects in the bright yet tranquil space are levitating. On a typically foggy San Francisco day, it's easy to feel drawn into this reflection chamber for sunlight. ▶

When planning the 2,800-square-foot day spa, Jiun Ho's namesake firm transformed the cages into pendant fixtures by placing bulbs where the birds might have been. The installation is intentionally eye-catching, but there remains "a bit of mystery," Ho says. "You have to come all the way in to really see it." True to his word, a tour of the spa's two levels reveals many atmospheric layers beyond the breezy welcome.

A Malaysian of Chinese descent, Ho was urged by the spa's Vietnamese husband-wife owners, Johnny Nguyen and Mimi Doan, to use Chinese elements as guideposts. Metal, wood, earth, water, and fire all make appearances as the space unfolds. Nguyen and Doan were also interested in following the principles of feng shui and in keeping things simple—an approach that fell agreeably in line with

a limited budget and a low environmental impact.

Many elements are either reclaimed or antique, including the birdcages, which Ho found while traveling in Thailand. The ethereal cages, in pristine condition, find a raw, weighty counterbalance in the weathered oak planks that he used both for the reception desk below and for a rectangular aperture in the dropped ceiling above. As the cages hang from the crisscrossed planks, the ad hoc composition "resembles a nest, echoing the birdcages," Ho says. "It's also a great way to gain height while concealing the pipes and ducts that the building code required us to leave in place."

Code and budget restrictions became catalysts for ingenuity. Just below the exposed pipes and ductwork in the nail salon, oak strips cross from side to side, then wrap down the walls to become



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**From top:** A staircase of concrete, steel, and laminated glass descends to the treatment rooms. Their doors display antique Chinese elm screens, while a teak column from a centuries-old Indonesian house occupies a nook.

**Opposite, clockwise from top:** Polyester curtains separate the pedicure stations. George Nelson chairs face an oak built-in, housing electric nail dryers, and an antique Burmese Buddha. Teak paneling in a treatment room's bathroom came from the facade of a Thai house dating to the mid-19th century.



manicure stations. It's a simple concept that works on a psychological level, Ho says. Customers asked, after they've left, what they remember about the ceiling tend to mention wood, not pipes and ducts.

Customers who instead descend from the celestial street level to the earthier basement are escorted by water that cascades through the center of the stairwell and into a gold-leafed urn. As a thematic through-line between the two levels, a flock of abstract bird sculptures flies across a wall in the waiting area at the bottom of the stairs—each winged piece is reclaimed metal hand-dipped in white acrylic. From here, a corridor leads to four treatment rooms for massages, facials, and skin therapies.

In three of these low-lit

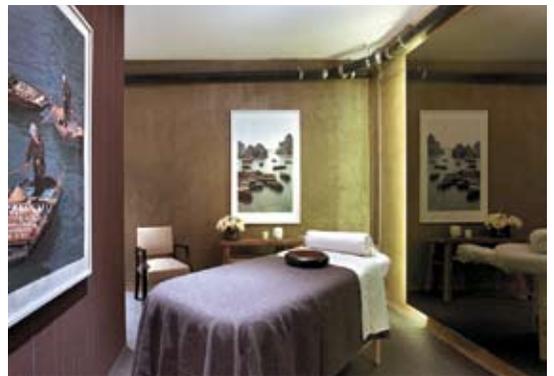
**Clockwise from top:** Flooring on the ground level is epoxy. Wool flannel covers two walls in a treatment room. Water cascades into a Vietnamese gold-leafed terra-cotta vessel. Jiun Ho shot the framed photographs in Vietnam.

chambers, cozy flannel covers the walls. The East Asian connection is most apparent in the largest treatment room's ensuite bathroom, where a feature wall's teak paneling is actually the facade of a 150-year-old house, shipped from Thailand. Once the panels were reassembled, Ho replaced the windows with mirrors but left the wood in its original rough state.

After a long hot soak in the presence of this disembodied dwelling, the sensation of relaxation is reinforced by the sight of the framed photographs throughout. All were taken by Ho during his sourcing trips to Vietnam—partly as a way to keep art costs low but, more important, as a way to connect to his clients' culture. "I believe in only original art," he adds. Gazing at the

mysterious mountains and placid seas, one feels it's almost possible to cross the threshold into another time and place. —*Sarah Rich*

**FROM FRONT THROUGH BLACK'S FARMWOOD:** DESK PLANKS, CEILING PLANKS (RECEPTION). **THROUGH GOLDEN TRIANGLE:** CAGES (RECEPTION), SCREEN (HALL), PANELING (BATHROOM). **HELLER THROUGH HIVE:** CHAIR (RECEPTION). **HALO:** RECESSED CEILING FIXTURES. **MAHARAM:** CURTAIN FABRIC (RECEPTION, NAIL SALON), SOFA FABRIC, PILLOW FABRIC (RECEPTION). **THROUGH NANCY MCKAY DESIGN & TRADING COMPANY:** COLUMN (HALL), CONSOLE (TREATMENT ROOM). **HERMAN MILLER:** SHELL CHAIRS (NAIL SALON). **THROUGH RICHARD GERVAIS COLLECTION:** STATUE (NAIL SALON), URN (STAIRWELL). **FLOOR DEPOT:** FLOOR TILE (BATHROOM). **JUN HO COLLECTION:** CHAIR (TREATMENT ROOM). **MAYA ROMANOFF CORPORATION:** WALL COVERING. **BOLON:** FLOORING. **THROUGHOUT LIGHTOLIER:** TRACK LIGHTING. **BENJAMIN MOORE & CO.:** PAINT. **MELINDA MORRISON LIGHTING:** LIGHTING CONSULTANT. **CTC ASSOCIATES:** MEP. **JIMMY ZHENG:** GENERAL CONTRACTOR.



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