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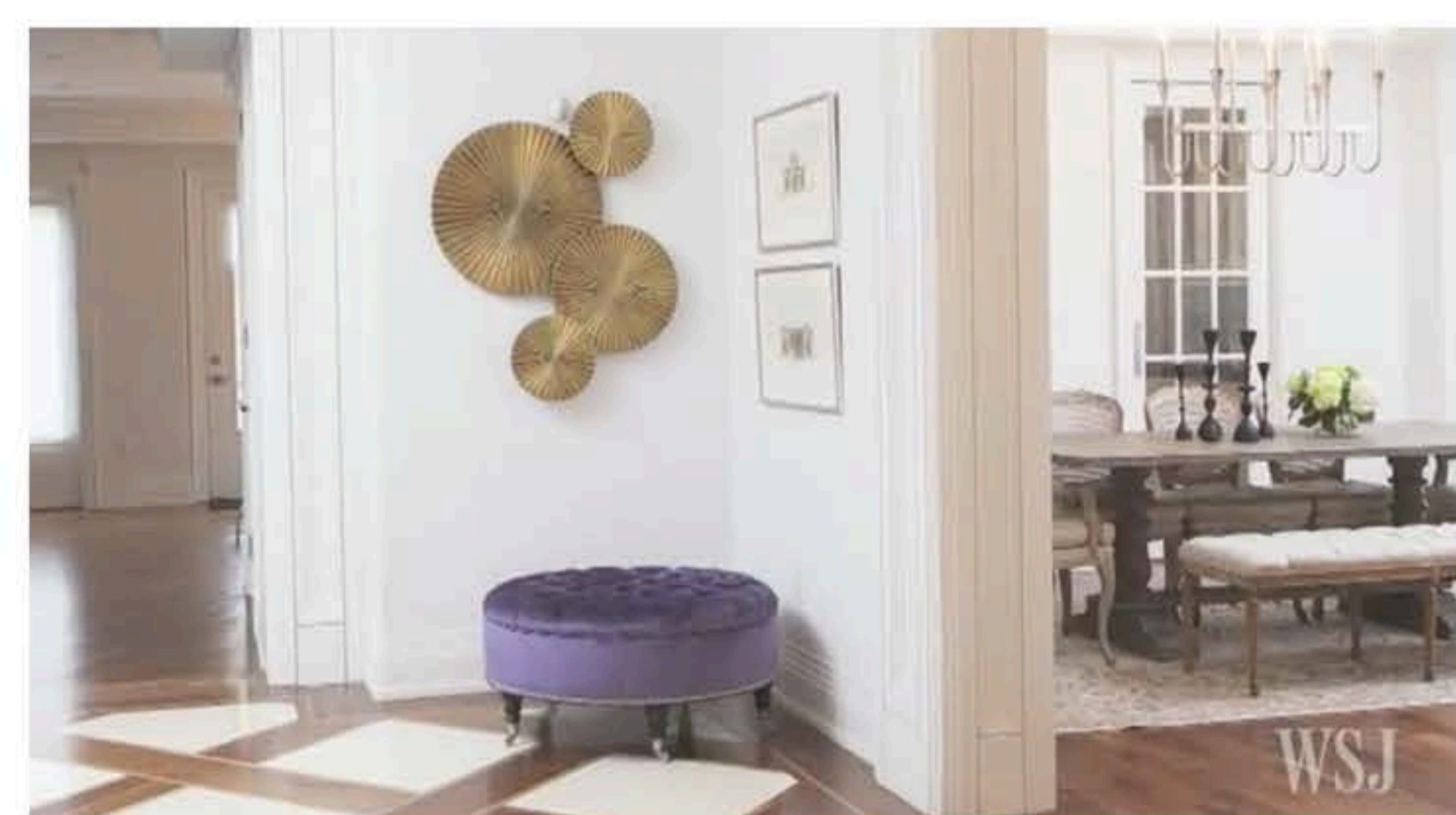
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In Luxury Homes, Foyers Get Functional—and Fabulous

Irked by what they see as wasted space, some luxury homeowners are asking designers to reimagine home entryways



Entryways and hallways are often an afterthought for home buyers. Now, some homeowners are asking designers to reimagine them as versatile spaces. Photo: Drew Kelly for The Wall Street Journal

By *Alina Dizik*

15 COMMENTS

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When **Gary Loeb** and David Frazee host a party in their 1897 Elizabethan home in San Francisco, many guests barely get past the front door. Instead they gather inside the wood-paneled foyer, which has 16-foot ceilings, an original fireplace and a vintage rug. “A lot of people just spend half the party standing in the foyer,” says Mr. Loeb, a 46-year-old executive for a health technology firm.

Long [the doormat of home design](#), entryways and hallways are often an afterthought for home buyers, who typically spend their money on other rooms. In a recent survey at The Wall Street Journal’s request, 46% of respondents on home-design website Houzz.com said hallways are the most overlooked spaces when decorating a home.

Now, irked by what they see as wasted space, some homeowners are asking designers to [reimagine entryways as versatile spaces](#) that double as dining rooms, dens and entertaining spaces. “People are not just hanging art on the walls and walking through,” says Jennifer Roberts, an associate broker with the Fisher Roberts team at Engel & Völkers in New York.

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When renovating their Sacramento, Calif., home, Randy Reynoso and Martin Camsey removed part of a wall to open up the entryway and create a homey feel where the two

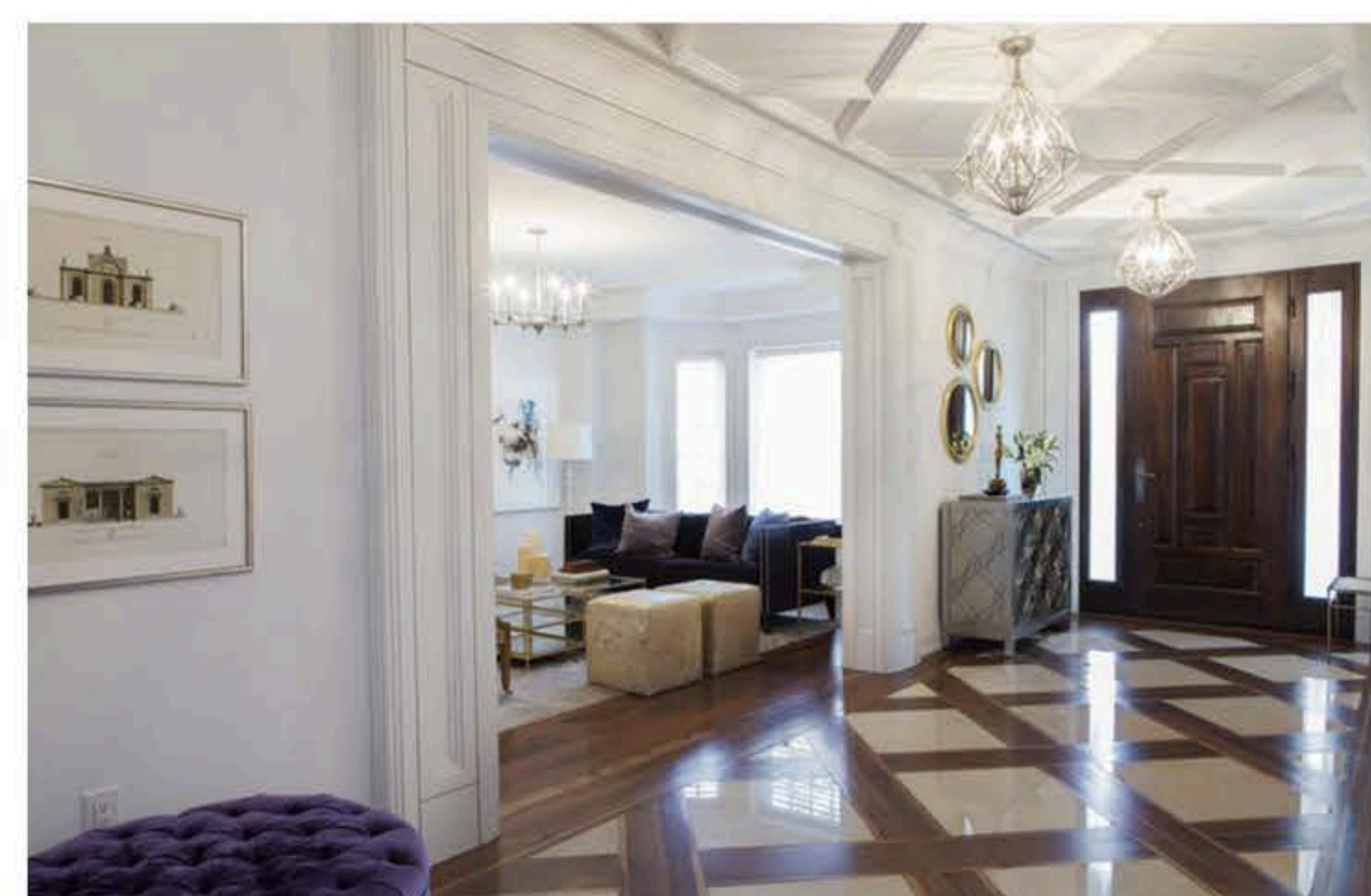
would want to linger. The long staircase in their Monterey Colonial-style home now has a custom wrought-iron railing and a vintage French chandelier that can be mechanically lowered for cleaning. The foyer also includes a powder room, and shelving in a seating area holds Longfellow’s “The Song of Hiawatha” and other vintage tomes from Mr. Reynoso’s great-grandmother’s library. “We reimaged what [the foyer] would look like in 1928,” when the house was built, said Mr. Reynoso, a 57-year-old financial institution executive who worked with local interior designer Curtis Popp on the project. He estimates the foyer cost about \$35,000 to create.

Modern, open-plan architecture poses a particular challenge for clients looking to bring back that Old World grandeur of entrances, says Gisue Hariri, co-founder of an architecture and interior-design firm in New York. “Historically, entrances were very much celebrated,” says Ms. Hariri. “In general, we try to make sure these neglected areas do make a comeback.”

In newer condos that lack formal entryways, Ms. Hariri suggests a partial wall to create an intimate space with a gallery feel when walking in the front door. For a client in Manhattan’s Sutton Place neighborhood, she created a wall that features a modern mural of walking figures by artist Julian Opie. Other wall designs by Ms. Hariri also include hidden storage—a way to keep clutter to a minimum without adding extra furniture.

Welcoming Entryways »

A slideshow of hallways and foyers in luxury homes.



4 of 16 The entryway of Melody Adhami’s home in Toronto home space is often used for side conversations when guests come over. *JENNIFER ROBERTS FOR*

Ms. Roberts, the New York broker, says sellers see more value in homes where transitional spaces have been put to work. A recent buyer turned the hallway between a two bedrooms into a den with a television. She has also seen homes where owners used a spacious entryway for formal dining. When selling a home, Ms. Roberts tells clients to be more creative when showing off their foyers and hallways. “You should definitely stage it so people can see how they should be utilizing it,” she says.

Regardless how foyers are used, they still need to make a good first impression. Melody Adhami, a 34-year-old who runs a mobile-app agency, says the foyer in her Toronto home is the one room that’s off limits to her two young children. The space is often used for side conversations when guests come over and has an oversize velvet ottoman and art created from metal disks, along with a console table for a wow factor when guests enter, she says. “It’s not necessarily used by the kids, so we could do nicer things,” says Ms. Adhami, who worked with designer Ines Mazzotta but declined to disclose costs.

Pamela O’Banion, a 62-year-old homemaker, wanted to create a sense of surprise when guests entered her 1,500-square-foot Nob Hill condo with views of San Francisco’s Golden Gate Bridge. First, she and her designer, Matthew Turner, closed up several doorways that led to other rooms and painted the walls a dark green to better define the entryway. Then they added dimly lighted sconces, a woven Versailles-style parquet floor and gilded furniture for a sense of romance. In all, the entryway project cost about \$50,000.

“I wanted [visitors] to think they were walking into a jewel box,” she says.

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