

May 21, 2005, 12:12AM

MY FAVORITE ROOM

Where memories dwell, minimally

Every object has a story in this family's living room

By **MOLLY GLENTZER**
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You won't find a single family photo in residential architect Carrie Glassman Shoemake's living room, but every object in the space has a story or a place in her life.

"To me, architecture and design are so much about memory," she said one day last week, while Pink Martini's *Sympathique* CD played in the background.

Glassman Shoemake and her husband, Ed Shoemake, also an architect, bought their circa 1927 home near Rice University 12 years ago because they loved its location and siting on a corner lot. They also knew the simplicity of its rooms would be a good fit for their contemporary aesthetic — which comes as a surprise, given the home's traditional exterior.

Spare Modernism reigns here. The living room's well-edited contents include such classics as a vintage credenza and a cocktail table by Florence Knoll and a Warren Platner glass-top table. The lamps are all pedigreed, too — a Palazetti paper lamp here, a reading light by Ligne Rosset there, Flos sconces above the fireplace.

A pair of vintage Eames molded-plywood chairs were rebuilt from a set of six that came from Glassman Shoemake's childhood home. "Our dogs had chewed the chair legs, and they had stains from spills, but we pulled them apart and salvaged two," Glassman Shoemake said. They look comfortable alongside a pair of new (but already classic-looking) Gridloc side tables in birch by San Francisco designer Chris Baisa.

Ed's childhood is honored, too. A black metal sculpture he made when he was a Boy Scout sits atop a stack of favorite books. It looks like a Halloween cat arching its back, with a tall, straight tail. "It was supposed to be a doughnut holder," Glassman Shoemake explained. "We've just always loved the shape."



A lithograph by Friedel Dzubas hangs above the custom-made sofa and a table by Warren Platner.



Gary Fountain Photos / For the Chronicle
Carrie Glassman Shoemake's favorite things include a 1949 Chieftan chair, a Robert Motherwell lithograph, her father's Knoll credenza and (below) a sculpture her husband Ed made as a Boy Scout.

The fireplace, with a limestone surround designed by the Shoemakes, is a shrine to simplicity. Between the sconces hangs an Ed Ruscha lithograph. Displayed like a sculpture on the narrow mantel is a thin, curvy stick their daughter Sarah found one day while walking the dog. "She just put it there when she came in, and we liked it," said Glassman Shoemake.

The mantel's only other decoration is a large arrowhead, a memento of a trip in West Texas with friends. "It was the most perfect one, and our friend found it soon after we had stepped over a coiled rattlesnake without knowing it."

The custom-made sofa, designed with a low seat height, is often



The Gridloc side table is new; the Eames molded plywood chair was salvaged from a set of six from Glassman Shoemake's childhood home.

where guests prefer to spend the night because it's so comfortable. "This is where I sit most of the time to read," Glassman Shoemake added.

But the room's most dominant seating is a regal, sloping Finn Juhl "Chieftain" chair in buttery-looking leather. The Shoemakes bought it for each other as an anniversary present. Placed wittily beside the large chair is a barely there "Xes" cocktail table whose top is large enough to hold only one glass. "It looks like a scepter to me," Glassman Shoemake said, smiling, "so it was perfect for the Chieftain."

The Knoll credenza spent many years in her father's office. Atop it sits a large, open copy of the Columbia Encyclopedia. "We use it all the time. We love to look things up but don't want pages and

pages of description," Glassman Shoemake said.

A sculpture of a gracefully poised hand the Shoemakes found in Paris has a fun history. "I saw it the first day we were there, driving by the shop in a cab, and thought there was no way we'd find it again. On our last day, we were walking down a street, and there it was."

Serendipity also had a hand in the Robert Motherwell lithograph above the credenza. "It's one of the reasons Ed and I met," Glassman Shoemake said. "I had just moved to Houston and was living with my sister on Wroxton Court. She was teaching at the Glassell School, and Ed was in her class, 'The World of Prints and Photography in Houston.' He wanted her opinion on this calligraphy lithograph he was hoping to buy and came over to show it to her."

The room's comfortable aura belies the notions that minimalism must be fussy or that frilly pillows and throws are the only means to warmth. This room is clearly the home's heart, a place where human interaction makes memories, too.

"Ed loves to cook, and we like having people over. This is where we start and finish our meals. We always throw a big Christmas party, themed to a different country each year, in here," Glassman Shoemake said. Daughter Sarah just returned from her first year at Sarah Lawrence College. "The first night she was home, we sat in here and talked for a long time."

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