

Can You Go Home Again?

Tuesday, May 1, 2012 | [San Diego Home/Garden](#) | Jason Hughes, Shay Hughes

By Ron Donoho

This magazine covers outstanding residential redesign. That's how we roll. However, the made-over downtown headquarters of Hughes Marino is a column-worthy commercial exception.

The 12,000-square-foot, dual-level, red brick building is a place of business. But step inside and cover one eye (to block out the reception desk) and you'd swear you were in an upscale residence, furnished with shelter-publication-worthy furniture, lighting, art and appliances.

"That's the look we were going for," says Shay Hughes, chief operating officer of the commercial real estate firm named for her husband, Jason Hughes, and David Marino. "We're family oriented and we want our clients to feel at home when they walk through the door."

Yes, they're family oriented. Jason and Shay (who oversaw the interior design) have side-by-side offices on the second floor. Shay shares her space with their daughter/director of business development, Star. And their son/junior associate, Tucker, has an office in the same corner.

Oh, about Jason's office...it used to be mine. I worked here at 1450 Front Street when it was the headquarters for *San Diego Magazine*. No slight intended, but when this was my workplace, there was no Olhausen billiard table, no EasyTurf golf putting green and no state-of-the-art gym with personalized lockers and towels.

Back in the day, there was no self-playing, baby grand Yamaha piano.

Yes, of course there used to be a kitchen. Now, though, the appliances include two Subzero refrigerators, Wolf induction electric cooktop, convection oven and microwave, and two Asko dishwashers.

These walls are now covered with pieces of art created by Christo, Pascal and other fine artists with *two* names, like Ashley Collins, Robert Townsend and San Diegan Neil Shigley.

The residential ambiance is apparent the moment you step through the front door. Above the lobby hangs a chandelier by Gibson and Gibson Antique Lighting (Jim Gibson also supplied chandeliers for the main conference room and above the billiard table).

The majority of the first floor is set up as a living room and entertainment area. An L-shaped couch arrangement faces and 80-inch, high-definition TV. A barrel-vaulted, truss-laced ceiling with multiple skylights covers the space.

Soho couches, grand chaises and Dakota leather chairs and ottomans are from Rachel Ashwell Shabby Chic Couture. The list of resources goes on and on...

Sigh.

Haven't you ever gotten homesick and gone back to the old neighborhood to glimpse your childhood house, or some former abode? We've all done it, even if we do recall the dire consequences depicted in Thomas Wolfe's novel *You Can't Go Home Again*. Wolfe's lead character had outgrown his roots. You might say the exact opposite

Hughes Marino

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was in effect for me at the Hughes Marino corporate/residential anomaly. But I refuse to be jealous. Rather, I proudly predict that this project will win myriad design awards.

And if Shay Hughes relents and converts a few back offices to bedrooms, I'll be the first to inquire about renting a unit.

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