

# HOUSEHOLD WORDS

By Caroelyne Zinko



San Francisco's skyline makes a dramatic backdrop to the living room of Mark Calvano's penthouse, above, which has an equally striking bedroom, below. The statue, bottom right, was a gift from Calvano's mother.

## Glass tree house serves as developer's private perch for work and play

Mark Calvano who worked for years as a commercial real estate developer in Silicon Valley, never planned on living in a glass tree house in San Francisco. He had plenty of trees at his home in Los Gatos. But when he retired in 2000, at the ripe old age of 35, his life took a turn toward the adventurous. He began traveling the world and hanging out with friends in the city. A pied-a-terre became a necessity. And one day, while out for a walk with a real estate agent friend, Calvano looked up and saw what he wanted: a glass penthouse at 900 Bush St.

It wasn't for sale, but that didn't bother Calvano. "That's the unit I want - go get it," he told his friend.

It turned out that the penthouse belonged to a couple who had only recently moved in. They offered to sell - for double their purchase price - but Calvano, whose fortune was made through making deals, turned them down. Four months later, to his surprise, the property went on the market. "It's the only time in my life I ever said, 'Get it without trying to make a deal,'" Calvano recalled. "My agent got it."

At 1,500 square feet, the home isn't especially large, but it seems big, thanks to what Calvano estimates is 1,000 square feet of glass and a 20-foot ceiling in the living room featuring Lagos Azul polished sandstone floors. Day or night, there's light from the sun or the twinkle of lights from the San Francisco skyline, his home's best

feature.

He sold his Los Gatos home in 2001. For five years he lived the high life, "partying around the world," he said. One of the main reasons was the death of his father at age 74. "I planned to retire at 50 and live to 100," said Calvano, who bought and sold buildings used for high-tech research and development. "When my dad died, it was time for me to come up with Plan B."

And so he's been enjoying his nest and dabbling in new ventures. For a while, he developed a men's clothing line and also invested in some films, including "Latter Days" with Jacqueline Bisset, and the soon-to-be-released "Corky's Hot Ice," a comedy-mystery caper set in the Philippines and San Francisco, about the theft of a diamond necklace and the investigation that ensues.

Calvano's home has been the scene of many cocktail parties, on holidays and for

his film ventures. His favorite caterer, Franc Harriss Fine Catering, typically serves beef tenderloin brochettes with truffle aioli and tarragon, bacon-wrapped scallops with lavender-maple glaze, and Yukon Gold potatoes with asiago cheese and basil.

He likes a clean, modern look, infused with the simplicity of Japanese antiques because they lend a sense of calm. That's important, now that Calvano, 45, is back at work in real estate, developing retail centers across California.

With all the glass, it wouldn't seem to be a place cloaked in privacy, but it is, and that's good because his penthouse has many roles: It's his home, his office and a spot for contemplation. "The windows are black form the outside, like a limousine," he said. "Other people can't see in, but you can see out. I cherish the view."

