



windsor's world

Interior designer Windsor Smith has been stealthily glossing pedigreed houses with modern-day sheen. But with her new line of furniture (and soon fabrics and rugs), her unstudied classic style is about to go big-time public. Her L.A. home is a riveting tutorial.

photographs by MIGUEL FLORES-VIANNA text by ERICA BEENEY

hen she first drove past the Monterey colonial tucked in one of L.A.'s storied canyons, Smith was delighted by its old-world grandeur. But even before she decided to buy, her mind began to race with visions of how she could update it. "I love that European sensibility where the kids move into an ancestral home and inject it with their modern lifestyle," she says, Indeed, this mash-up of past and present is Smith's calling card. She has reworked a seashore retreat originally designed by Sister Parish and renovated the illustrious Howard Hawks estate. Her process is intuitive-and steeped in the personalities of her world-class clientele. "It's really about listening to how they aspire to live," she says. That individualistic approach led her to launch a line of custom furnishings, and she's partnering with Kravet for an eponymous collection of rugs, which will debut this fall, and fabrics for next summer (available through its showrooms). Many of her designs found their way into her home-perhaps the best example of her time-bandit style. In just a year, Smith turned old-fashioned, dark interiors into bright and breezy havens, changing the very way the rooms functioned. Even the porches off her sons' bedrooms, which once offered shade for ladies-who-lunch, have a new lease. "The boys hang out up there with their guitars," she says. "Pretty soon, they'll be pulling girls up on the railing."







Smith bases her decorating on the way families use rooms today, regardless of their intended purpose. She sacrificed a maid's room to form a big, open kitchen, as that's where she and her crew like to gather. The airy, beach-house vibe of the all-white palette and the checkerboard floors undercuts the potential formality of the extra-long dining table and the Chippendale-inspired chairs. An armchair and industrial lamps overhead further defy expectations. Eating in the kitchen meant the dining room could be reinvented as a place for the family to play cards and casually entertain. "Dining rooms are normally the least used spaces in a house," Smith says. Hers gets an inviting injection from a spontaneous-feeling mix of seating—all her own designs—that sets a laid-back tone: a pair of Directoire chairs, a Chippendale-detailed bench and a Regency settee.





GETTING OFF THE GRID

In the living area, Smith bypassed the standard fireplace-as-focalpoint in favor of an arrangement that maximizes the space's long, rectangular dimensions and that doesn't leave dead areas around the edges. She bisected the room with a double-sided sofa from her line, in effect creating two seating areas instead of one formal salon. Each demi-lounge is oriented toward French doors that are always left open, and the result is a sense of permanent vacation. "I like to feel like I'm at some fabulous resort at home," she says. That sentiment is underscored by the bohemian bazaar of furnishings, from a high-style antique chandelier to Moroccan inlaid chairs. Again, Smith achieves undecorated decorating: The classic sofa is loosened up by the heap of throw pillows, and mirrors and paintings lean against the walls, as opposed to being properly hung. The Smith-designed velvet ottoman is often used for impromptu dining.

FROM THE NEW WINDSOR SMITH HOME COLLECTION

opposite page: SOFA Double-sided "Windsor" from \$10,900 and OTTOMAN Moroccan-style from \$1,800 windsersmithhome.com for information

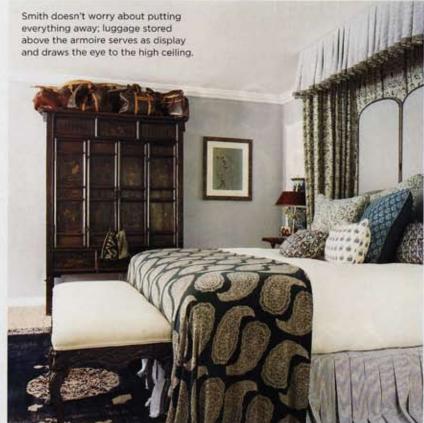
this page: STRIPED PILLOW FARRIC Travers hand-printed linen about \$114/yard, e-mail designproxidabuilding.com MIRROR Custom 8' x 10' about \$4,000 Bountiful (310) 450-3620 CHANDELIER (similar to shown, in mirror reflection) "Paris Flea Market" \$1,470 circalighting.com CHINESE STOOLS \$729 each. roomsandgardens.com for stores WALL PAINT Romantic Pink #2004-70, benjaminmoore.com for stores





SOMETHING BORROWED, SOMETHING BLUE

Uniting elements that are seemingly in opposition is another Smith hallmark. The master suite makes use of that most traditional masculine fabric—seersucker—in refreshingly feminine ways. Carrying it from the walls through the pleating of the canopy and bed skirt brings out the inherent delicacy of the puckered blue-and-white stripe. The boys'-club paisley bedspread and imposing dark-wood armoire lighten up when juxtaposed with off-white upholstery and bedding and a collection of pillows in a range of batiks. Most importantly, the room reflects Smith's personality. "I'm a closet preppy/earth mama," she confesses.



drums inspired the African bedding.

FROM THE NEW WINDSOR SMITH HOME COLLECTION

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LOOSE NARRATIVE DEVICES

The stairwell assemblage of retro-beachy photographs, including Jacques-Henri Lartigue's massive candid glamour shot (found at a flea market) of the French Riviera's golden age, abets Smith's fantasy of a year-round vacation. Taking advantage of unconventionally shaped walls can be tricky; within the narrow confines of the stairwell, a single piece might get lost, while too many could feel cluttered. Smith solved the problem by anchoring a large central photo at eye level and surrounding it with smaller pieces of different sizes in a salon-style formation-rather than a "just so" arrangement. Matching white frames unify and update the collection. In her son Oliver's bedroom, the theme is rock 'n' roll. Smith recalls her son's plea: "He said, 'Mom, you're not going to put in wallpaper, are you?'" Instead, she pulled together his collection of vintage rock posters with simple black and white frames. The overall effect is coordinated without being contrived.