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TRANSFORMATIONS

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LIGHTING
IDEAS

SAN FRANCISCO
RENOVATION

SARATOGA
REMODEL

GLEN ELLEN
MAKEOVER

PALM SPRINGS
RESTORATION





WINE COUNTRY COLORS

FOR A SAN FRANCISCO FAMILY'S
TRADITIONAL WINE COUNTRY RETREAT, JAY JEFFERS
ILLUSTRATES HOW A LITTLE COLOR GOES A LONG WAY.

BY JULIE CARLSON PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW MILLMAN



The main living area contains three distinct sections. The chairs in the foreground face a wraparound corner window seat. The center seating area is arranged around a stone-top fireplace and the dining table at the far end is used for meals, family games and entertaining.



In the house's previous incarnation, Sicily-style furnishings mixed with contemporary art and fixtures. Jeffers chose more refined lines and sophisticated colors—applied to French antiques and farmhouse classics—to portray the theme of casual country elegance.

Sometimes a weekend drive in the country can change your life. At least it did for one San Francisco couple, when the wife set off for Wine Country one May morning and returned with the keys to a weekend retreat. (Well, not quite—the transaction took a few weeks.) It may sound impulsive, a bit flight-of-fancy-ish, but one glimpse of the Glen Ellen property dispels any misgivings as to the couple's soundness of mind.

"We had been searching for a house in Carneros for two years with no success," says the husband, a venture capitalist. "We decided to compare properties in Wine Country, and my wife discovered the Glen Ellen house on her first day out. We were in escrow within days, closed on the property June 30 and moved in at the end of the summer."

"The setting is hypnotic," the wife says. "This area is very rural, with lots of farmland. Glen Ellen is a modest, low-key town—we love the annual Fourth of July block party and the relaxed atmosphere. Our two teenagers can hike, swim and roam freely."

The property immediately struck the couple as the ideal Sonoma County getaway: A nine-acre swath of the most breathtaking scenery anywhere, it encompasses three and a half acres of 18-year-old Cabernet vines and sweeping views of mountains in

the distance. The main house (which stands between a secluded studio and the caretaker's house) is situated on a level clearing, with vineyards on one side and a sloping hillside on the other. Fortunately, the house's exterior and the grounds had been meticulously maintained. The interiors, however, were another story. The board-and-batten structure was built in the early 1990s, and the previous owners had finished the indoor spaces in a Santa Fe motif—sponge-painted peach walls prevailed. "It was not our style," says the wife.

Enter Jay Jeffers, a friend of the couple's and a star in the local design firmament. The wife had met him through her visits to Spa Radiance, one of Jeffers' San Francisco projects. Jeffers is known for his decidedly modern vocabulary and love of such innovative designers as David Hicks and Billy Baldwin. Among his recent projects are a hip lounge for the 2004 Screen Actors Guild awards that

RIGHT: Designer Jay Jeffers relaxes in the living room of his clients' Glen Ellen retreat—a study in bold colors and wily, old-fashioned pairings. **BELOW:** In the boy's room, a pair of Adirondack-style beds dressed in plaid looks fresh with the addition of a stool desk used as a nightstand.



featured walls draped in swags of pink and chocolate satin, and a study for the 2005 San Francisco Decorator Showcase, an arresting mix of high-style black and white Regency wallpaper, Kelly-green and Lucite accents and a vintage Vladimir Kagan desk.

"We are definitely not Jay's standard client," says the wife. "When we met with him to discuss the Glen Ellen house, we weren't sure it was the right match. We like his more modern work, but we are more traditional," adds the husband. "After a week of agonizing, we called him and said we didn't think we were right for him."

But Jeffers swung into action. "I really wanted to work with them, and to make the house about them," he says. "Even though my style is more modern, I'm comfortable working in a variety of periods, and I have a background in traditional design." Jeffers made a trip to Swallowtail, a favorite store in San Francisco, and flagged a few pieces he envisioned for the project—including a pair of scaled-down wing chairs, a spiky bureau featuring drawer fronts clad in leather-bound book spines to resemble library shelves and a pair of fabulously curvy 1930s French beds that Jeffers thought perfect for the room of the couple's teenage daughter.

Soon afterward, they met for a design summit, and Jeffers went to work pulling together ideas for the house. "We loved everything he selected," say the couple. During one marathon meeting, the trio mapped out a plan for the house. "We picked out furniture, fabrics and colors, and we went with almost all of Jay's suggestions," says the wife. "They didn't want to agonize over every decision," Jeffers observes. The husband admits, "I was seeing double by the end of the day."

From the outset, the 12-week timeline—requested so that the family could use the weekend house that summer—presented a significant challenge. "It was a very efficient process," says the husband. "Jay is one of those rare creative minds that is also very organized, efficient and thorough. He kept after suppliers and made sure everything was delivered on time."

Jeffers instantly knew which colors would work in the open-plan dining and living area, which features four pairs of French



To contrast with the other
French-style pieces, French
designer Pierre Paulin's
bed is a masterpiece of
the 1970s. The bed's
headboard and footboard
are upholstered in a red and
white floral pattern that
is the only color in the
entire scheme for the room.



In the sitting area of the master bedroom, Jeffrey chose to accentuate the views by leaving the wall of windows bare while making the most of the pitched ceiling by treating it with a boldly printed fabric.



doors and overlooks wisteria-shaded decks and the swimming pool. "The obvious impulse would have been to use shades of green to echo the landscape," he says. "Instead, I decided to bring in the sky with a robin's-egg blue, which we used on the window and door frames. For a modern look, we used rust-red accent tones and a pale, creamy yellow for the walls."

"Jay has such a sure grasp of color," says the husband, "and he knows how to create a mood. We wanted to avoid beige and were looking for a comfortable, inviting atmosphere that is soothing but doesn't put you to sleep."

A few key pieces anchor the living room, notably the wing chairs from Swallowtail, which were covered in a fanciful pattern named California. Two comfortable, cushy sofas from A. Rudin create one seating area; in the far corner, a pair of bamboo chairs and a banquette piled with cushions create another. Cushions and pillows in warm-toned stripes, checks and other patterns accent the room.

One of Jeffrey's favorite spaces is the daughter's room, a romantic composition in cranberry and soft gray. The beloved beds from Swallowtail set the stage, with a curvy French dresser painted in gray-and-white stripes, mercury-glass table lamps and gingham-trimmed walls, windows and doorways. The effect is feminine

without being precious or frilly. In contrast, the son's room is rustic and masculine, with vintage touches like 1940s metal lamps, a steel desk serving as a night table and a carved-oak dresser.

Upstairs, the interior designer created an inviting parental retreat. A private nook off the bedroom is outfitted in a fanciful Moroccan style, with yellow-leather armchairs from San Francisco's Southall Antiques and walls draped in yards of an exotic fabric printed with elephants, camels and palm trees. The couple calls it the "Casbah room."

"Jay has the ability to be creative even within more conservative constraints," says the husband. "He pushed and challenged us during the process. We would never have imagined living in a house that included a pavilion tented in Indian fabric."

"He is a wonderful soul," says the wife, "and ultimately that's what is important." Adds the wife, "We trust each other, we like each other and we will work with him until death do us part." ■



Walls sponge painted in soft tones made the former master suite feel a bit fresh for a weekend getaway. Jeffrey brought the space to life with warm woods and easy reads. On the bedding, a bold plaid escapes the country cliché with a tone-on-tone palette.