

MAY 2008

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CEILING GO UP AND UP AND UP. WINDOWS, TOO. THE KITCHEN CABINETS ARE SO TALL, IT TAKES A LADDER TO REACH THE TOP. TALK ABOUT HIGH DRAMA... A WINE COUNTRY HOUSE WITH A BIG PERSONALITY REDEFINES SONOMA STYLE.

Interior design by
JAY JEFFERS

Interview by
ALEXANDRIA
ABRAMIAN-MOTT

Photographs by
JAMES CARRIERE

ALEXANDRIA ABRAMIAN-MOTT: First things first—that clock face! What’s that about?

JAY JEFFERS: You’ve got these huge windows and a very high ceiling in the living room, so I needed something massive to ground it all. The clock is about 50 feet wide. We had to take the door off to install it, and now you can’t get it out of here!

The ceilings throughout the house seem to demand that you go more elegant, less country-cozy than the typical house here in the wine country of Sonoma. How tall are they?

They’re 15 feet high—and they do give the house this slightly grand feel that I like. People think with a house of these proportions, they need that overscale furniture that was big in the ‘90s. I didn’t want that. I have a mix of custom furniture and antiques that range from formal to relaxed. And I used some pieces with dramatic lines—like the coral ottoman under the clock face—to pull the eye down, not up.

The eye is also pulled toward all the pattern.

I love mixing different patterns. I usually do a lot of color on the walls, but one of the first things the client told me was that she wanted understated colors on the walls to reflect the Sonoma light. So I kept it quiet. But that gave me license to do busy patterns. Even some fabrics that look solid, like those red chairs in the living room, have a tiny pattern when you get up close.

How do you keep it from looking chaotic?

First of all, they need to be different scales and textures, so you do a bigger floral with a smaller graphic, for example. I really like to pile on the pattern, but you don’t want a room where your eye is going insane.

So how much is too much?

It’s like women and accessories. Put them all on, then take one off and you’re good. And

here’s a trick—I typically try to use one pattern in each room that has all the colors in the room. It’s a great trick because in a bedroom it could be as big as a comforter or as small as a pillow.

Why am I not surprised that the bathtub also has got some pattern going on. Is it antique?

No. You can order tubs that come printed and ready to be painted. We had so much fun with that.

Looks like you had fun with the backsplash in the kitchen, too. Those rows and rows of leaves! How did you come up with that?

I wanted it to have some pattern, but not be jarring. It has a casual yet dressy look, and it fit the mood I was after in the kitchen, which was that it feel like you were in the country, but not French Countryside.

What’s the difference between country and French Countryside?

In the wine country of Sonoma and Napa, French Country is what would be expected, and that’s where you get lots of florals and mossy greens and reds and wine colors. I wanted an element of traditional Sonoma style, but a fresh, more vibrant interpretation. So we riffed on some of the clichés, updating the look by using persimmon, citrusy greens and yellows. You get that country feel but it ends up being a little more elegant, as you said earlier.

Did I also say I love that deer head chandelier?

Wonderfully eccentric, isn’t it? We wanted to bring the outdoors in, as we did with the leaf pattern in the backsplash. We integrated the dining with the outdoors, too, especially with the vista of trees framed by two walls of windows. We used a wallpaper called Woods, which picks up the persimmon color in the house, and a chandelier inspired by branches made by a local artist, Carl Dern.

Why a Roman shade in a kitchen?

Every room should be a well-dressed room, including the kitchen. The window above the sink is exceptionally tall and needed an accent. And I used the same curtain fabric as the family room, which is directly across from the kitchen, so the shade pulls the two rooms together—and makes the kitchen just a hint more intimate.

You seem to have really let loose once you got to the pool house.

This was an area where I decided to go a little bit crazy—where people are going to walk in and go, “Wow! I love it!” My original wacky thought was to make it look like a tent, using linen. But the cost was ridiculous, and then we thought of kids in wet bathing suits and that it was going to look tattered quickly. So we went with a tented look using paint.

That cushion that you’ve got tucked under the coffee table—I don’t get it.

It’s a dog bed that you can just pull right out. And it is an outdoor fabric, like everything else in the room. They’ve got a Labradoroodle, so you know it’s going to be in the pool.

This is a family house with young children, a dog, lots of guests. It all looks pretty sophisticated for so much action.

I always want my interiors to have a luxurious and elegant feel. But I’d never upholster a sofa in a silk taffeta, because you sit on it once and it’s ruined. That’s partly why I use so much pattern. It’s just more forgiving when it comes to constant use. We call it the peanut butter finger test. Pattern helps to hide real-life things. I don’t want to get calls from clients saying that a sofa’s ruined because someone dropped grape juice on it.

Or, more likely, red wine.

That, too!

PRODUCED BY DORETTA SPERDUTO

Designer Jay Jeffers used a 10-foot-wide, 1930s Philadelphia factory clock face from Artefact Design & Salvage to ground the 15-foot-high ceiling of a house in the vineyards of Sonoma, California. A pair of A. Rudin chairs flank an antique leather tray table. Jeffers designed the Moroccan-inspired ottoman in the living room, upholstered in Cavallo in coral from Cortina Leathers and trimmed in Taffeta Silk in biscuit from the Silk Trading Company to draw the eye down.

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Tall living room windows get a big floral treatment with floral curtains in a Rains Textiles fabric, Kashmir in India. Lockhart armchairs are covered in Bonulley in coral from Hines, with Edelmann's Real Woven in burnt orange on the back to avoid pattern overload. **OPPOSITE** Many Leaves Field mosaic tile backsplash from Waterworks "brings the outdoors into the kitchen," says Jeffers, as do the antique carved deer head chandelier and Erika Brynson bar stools.


JAY JEFFERS suggests ...

- I like to build everything in and panel it. If I could panel the oven, I would. There's no reason to leave your dishwasher or refrigerator exposed. That's like showing off your appliances. And what's the point in that? Paneling makes a kitchen feel more like a real room than strictly a work space.
- There's no such thing as a cute toaster oven. Just use your oven!






CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: Cole & Son's Woods wallpaper in terra-cotta and a branch-shaped bronze chandelier by Carl Dorn integrate the dining room with the outdoors. In the master bedroom, a 19th-century Italian headboard is upholstered in Osborne & Little's Tamara. The pool house pendants are antique glass. In the guest bathroom, an antique chair covered in terry cloth melds function with chic. A Waterworks tub is hand-painted by Philippe Grandvoinet. OPPOSITE: For the pool house, Jeffers designed a 10-foot-long sofa and covered it in Madison in driftwood from Lulu DK. "This is a stylish hangout meant for entertaining," he says. "It has a slightly Moroccan feel, and we used muted blues to reflect the pool and sky." The pillow stored in the coffee table is a dog bed.



"This was an area where I decided to go a little bit crazy—where people are going to walk in and go, 'Wow! I love it!'"

JAY JEFFERS

A bright, yellow-themed sitting room. A window seat with yellow cushions and a white blanket is the focal point. To the left is a patterned yellow armchair. A wooden cabinet with glass doors holds decorative items. A chandelier hangs from the ceiling. The room is filled with yellow and white tones, with a patterned Roman shade over the window.

The Roman shade captures all the colors in the sitting room, a "trick" Jeffers typically employs in all his rooms. "Everything in here is soft and inviting," he says. "The window seat is four feet deep, so there's lots of lounge space." **OPPOSITE:** Jeffers used "an abundance of glass tiles" from Waterworks in the guest bathroom, covering the entire floor and the wall behind a pair of Waterworks sinks. The amber stripes "break up this large space." Deco mirrors from Pottery Barn.

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