

Pure & Simple

An array of architectural refinements paired with curated interiors give an Old World-style Southern California home timeless appeal.

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Architecture: Timothy Joslin, Timothy Joslin Architect PC Interior Design: Denise Kuriger, Denise Kuriger Design
Home Builder: Paul Munsch and Dan Walter, Munsch Homes





Teak RH chairs and a bespoke Burmese teak dining table by L'Artigiano Studio make for an inviting dining area beneath the custom steel pergola. Adding texture are Marsee pendants with shades in a Textilene fabric inspired by Bedouin tents.

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hese are people who really appreciate design and love to collect meaningful pieces,” says designer Denise Kuriger of her clients, a couple for whom she’d previously reimaged a house in Tahoe. Downsizing to a smaller Mediterranean-style

home in Rancho Santa Fe, however, called for necessary edits to fit their stockpile of treasured furniture and art—not to mention the addition of a few star pieces to round out the rooms.

That wasn’t the homeowners’ only challenge. While the house met their basic requirements—one-level living spaces, the ability to host their five adult sons and their families, and a backyard large enough to install a lap pool—the extensive array of ornate Tuscan-Spanish architectural details gave them pause. The abode didn’t need a makeover so much as a *makeunder*. “It was too much of a heavy-handed hacienda,” recalls architect Timothy Joslin of his first impression. “A lot of minor refinements, simplifications and subtle manipulations made a big impact and resulted in what’s now a lovely, cohesive home.”

In synergistic collaboration with Kuriger, Joslin redid the doors and windows with cleaner, narrow-profile metal systems, raising their headers to bring height and light to the rooms. The primary bedroom’s footprint was expanded to carve out a seating area, the kitchen gutted, and the primary bath reorganized and upgraded with new flooring. Sliding and bifold doors connect the interiors to gracious courtyards and loggias appointed with dining spaces. Even the home’s exterior was treated to a touch-up: builders Paul Munsch and Dan Walter placed an over-grout or “smear” application atop the existing stonework to soften it slightly, “making it look more timeless,” Walter notes.

For the interiors, Kuriger freshened the Mediterranean-style setting with a mix of modernist lighting, European antiques and vintage finds, plus some contemporary surprises. “That way, it’s not so one-note,” she comments. “The materials and furniture here feel like a collection that has evolved over several decades.” At Blackman Cruz, she spotted a set of 1960s upholstered Italian chairs—light and dark neutrals, strong graphic shapes—and knew they’d

set the tone for what she calls the home’s “modern Italian” direction. In the bar, they complement blonde-wood built-ins with metal inserts, as well as a multi-armed, cylindrical lighting fixture. Meanwhile, at the end of a hall, a vignette of some of her client’s pieces—an antique chest, curated objets and artwork—are given the spotlight. “One idea I kept in mind as we worked was: Here’s a house with an inherited layer of old European furniture, but punctuated with midcentury pieces and contemporary materials too,” the designer says of her sourcing and styling process.

The great room’s palette of rich neutral tones among varying shades of wood and stone is awash with sunlight, courtesy of glass doors that open to courtyards on two sides. Wood makes a statement via a massive late-18th-century armoire shipped from Europe, a highly specific stunner for which Kuriger searched high and low. Yet she cites the floral upholstered armchairs as the room’s whimsical design starting point. “Those are from an early shopping trip in Los Angeles with my client—their fabric inspired a whole color scheme,” she notes. A color scheme that starts with patterned throw pillows and a woven rug, each picking up flecks of the chairs’ chocolate, beige, navy and moss.

Variations of this palette continue throughout the house. The kitchen features a marble island facing a white subway tile backsplash and custom metal hood, while a black-and-white laundry room is decked out with cabinetry for storage. The primary bedroom is a softer iteration of the same hues, clad in whites, ivories and steel blue and illuminated by a spare white metal chandelier. It hangs above a new seating area anchored by the couple’s existing chinoiserie armchairs, and offers views of the rear yard and pool.

The wife can hardly decide on a favorite aspect of their new house, although the great room ranks high. “It’s a beautiful place to relax,” she enthuses. “When we open up the doors, it feels like you’re sitting outside.” She also notes that despite this residence being smaller than their previous one, its outdoor areas offer more gathering spots—an ideal set up for parties and holidays with their five children and 17 grandchildren. That’s a fitting assessment for a home designed to blend and bridge generations, and proof that downsizing doesn’t mean you have to spare an ounce of grandeur. ■

In the great room, a William Morris velvet covers chairs from Obsolete, while the sofas are upholstered in a Mark Alexander linen from Romo. The C.J. Peters low table and black side table by Michael Smolich Studio add to the earthy palette, as does the Crosby Street Studios rug.





A French 18th-century oak armoire sourced through Lance Thompson anchors the dining side of the great room, with proportions befitting the Western Window Systems glass-and-aluminum doors. Alongside, a Liaigre bench from Thomas Lavin is paired with a custom dining table from Démiurge.

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—DENISE KURIGER



Above: An assortment of materials decks out the renovated kitchen, including subway tiles by Mission Tile West and a slab of Nordic White marble from Stoneville. Apparatus' brass-and-glass Tassel pendants and a blackened-steel hood by North County Custom Builders fill the space above.

Opposite: "The wife took the lead in terms of furnishing the outdoors," notes interior designer Denise Kuriger. Much of the residents' existing furniture is on display, such as chairs upholstered in a linen from Perennials ringing a Formations table.





Above: Expansive Steelworks Etc. windows filter in gracious amounts of light, as seen in the primary bathroom. Above the freestanding Victoria + Albert matte black tub, Rose Uniacke's Leaded Lantern balances the space's geometry.

Opposite: Formations table lamps with parchment shades, throw pillows in several Rose Tarlow Melrose House textiles fabricated by Sloan Reis and a cream-and-indigo area rug by Elizabeth Eakins harmonize with the clients' bedroom furnishings. The wallpaper is Phillip Jeffries.