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Interior design by MARY McDONALD Interview by DAVID A. KEEPS Photographs by AMY NEUNSINGER

In the living room of a Los Angeles home, designer Mary McDonald employed hints of color against a neutral backdrop for a quietly refined mood. "In monochrome rooms, texture is key," says McDonald, who covered the custom-made chaise in Pierre Frey's Ice linen, and Reagan Hayes's Henry sofa in a Duralee cotton velvet, with pillows in Schumacher's Chinon silk and Padova damask. McDonald designed English-style bookcases in taupe with back panels painted a pale blue. The Klismos chairs are from JF Chen.





Interior design by EAST MANHATTAN. Interview by DAVID A. WEISS. Photography by ART KUNSTLER. CA

Pattern in a pale palette can be bold. In a sitting area off the kitchen, a chevron-pattern tile floor plays off the curtains and slipper chairs, both in GP & J Baker's Block Stripe. The custom-made sectional is upholstered in Donghia's Charleston linen-cotton, and the walls are painted in Sensible Hue by Sherwin-Williams.

OPPOSITE: Industrial-style Restoration Hardware pendants add contrast above the kitchen island. The cabinets are painted in Roman Column by Sherwin-Williams.







DAVID A. KEEPS: Some homes scream with color; this one seduces with whispers of it.

MARY McDONALD: Are you psychic? That's exactly what I've been saying in my head. This house was not large, not old, and not brand new. There was just a bit of a Provence influence, but everything was so dark and heavy. I wanted it to be light but warm and pretty, so the entire palette was based around ivory, oatmeal, beige, gray, and taupe, plus splashes of lavender, aqua, and celadon that flow nicely from room to room. And we needed a little bit of gold to add glamour. Now the house is so happy, it's like floating on a cloud.

But aren't these neutrals and pastels somewhat lacking in the drama you're known for?

I actually love those shades as long as there are a lot of textures and tonalities in the finishes, furniture, and fabrics. This house really showcases the idea that against a palette of creams and grays, even the palest color is going to stand out. It's a more modern way of making a color statement, instead of doing black and white with bright accents, which seems a little dated. Or doing saturated rooms like red on red on red—which, by the way, I love and think will always have a place in interiors.

Is that why you made the den such a vivid blue?

No. The clients are attorneys in their early 30s who like modern things, but the wife has a sentimental attachment to this blue Persian rug from her mother. So the whole room was based around it, but I didn't want it to become a dark, navy room. To keep it fresh, I used a lot of white and ikat on the pillows and the border of the curtains.

Why the jolt of red?

It would've been boring without another color. I was on the fence about adding red, even though there is some in that rug. When I was going through her photos, I found the cutest color picture of her engagement party, which we blew up to hang above the sofa. She's wearing a red dress in it, and that was the cherry on the cake to pull out into the room.

So what was your design mantra?

For this house, I went with a clean, modern California take on French country, with a teeny bit of industrial sparseness. I added crisp white crown moldings that punctuate the walls with old-world architectural character, and refinished all the floors to pale driftwood. The living and dining rooms are open to one another, but each has its own personality. The living room has that French country feeling, and the dining room has more of a

loft vibe. There's a lacquered 1960s sideboard and a polished-concrete dining table with a pretty metal base that was half glam, half Mad Max. It's a great look, but honestly, you have to be sure of where to put that table, because it's so heavy you will never want to move it again.

The kitchen looks like an airy patisserie.

It was a dark mess, so we blew it all out and put in Carrara marble counters and white cabinetry, except for the center island, which is a weighty dark charcoal. That anchors the room and also hides scuffs, because island cabinets tend to get kicked a lot, and the clients have two kids. The one really modern element was the floor. They had seen painted patterned floors in my book, so I did this chevron pattern in an engineered stone tile.

And then you added striped curtains and upholstery. What's the secret for that to work?

You can use a good stripe two ways: railroaded as a horizontal, which makes curtains zippy, and vertically on a traditional slipper chair. The width and tone of the stripe actually bring out the flavor of the floor. A tiny little stripe would be too busy and sweet; this way is clean and contemporary.

How did you land on white picture frames?

If there's one thing I hate, it's seven million different pictures all over the house. The wife wanted a place to collect family portraits, to be added to over time. And I have a philosophy that I call 'premeditated whimsy,' where you create a collection with one common thread, so what might seem random actually looks tied together.

What was the inspiration for the master bedroom?

The wife showed me a photo of a room from the Hôtel Hermitage in Monaco, where they went on their honeymoon, but I thought it was a little too spa-like and sparse. It needed visual texture, so for the headboard, bed skirt, and as an accent on the chairs, I used a fabric that has the look of an antique pattern, and then the lavender touches liven things up. The bed is in a niche, so I designed a pleated-linen treatment that surrounds the bed and nightstands to create a cocoon. It's a more updated version of a French boudoir, totally inspired by Château de Malmaison just outside Paris, where Napoleon Bonaparte and his wife, Josephine, had a famous tented room. That's my favorite place in the universe, and I guess I cannot get away from my Francophile-ness. Even when I try to be clean and contemporary, it still comes out like Malmaison.

PRODUCED BY DORETTA SPERDUTO

LEFT: The client's heirloom Persian rug inspired the color palette for the den, which McDonald envisioned as "a hip, cozy library with a fireplace and television." The sofa is covered in Perennials' Plushy fabric, with pillows in Ralph Lauren Home's Sandbar canvas and Quadrille's Kazak ikat, which is also used as a border on the curtains. The custom-made ottoman is upholstered in Madron by William Yeoward for Designers Guild, and the chair is covered in a Rogers & Goffigon cotton. Ralph Lauren Home's Anette library light is from Circa Lighting, and the bookshelf is painted in Naval by Sherwin-Williams. The dark color highlights the sculptural qualities of the books and objects arranged on the shelves.





1. Schumacher's Whitney Floral wallpaper and a Venetian mirror give movie-star glamour to the dressing room. The bench was designed by McDonald. 2. In the open dining room: a mid-century console, upholstered chairs, and an industrial table. 3. A Cartier clock and lavender roses complement the master bedroom's color scheme. 4. The son's room has a nautical flavor in neutrals with navy accents. Chair by Bel Bambini. 5. Pillows on the breakfast banquette in, clockwise from left, Avery Cotton, Conundrum by Celerie Kemble, and Beacon Cotton Stripe, all from Schumacher. 6. "The striped fabrics bring out the character of the kitchen floor," McDonald says. 7. A One Kings Lane garden stool acts as a side table in the den, and keeps with the room's blue hues. **OPPOSITE:** "The house is on a golf course with manicured lawns, so I liked repeating the grays and ivories of the interior against all the greenery," McDonald says of the limestone-tile veranda, which has Restoration Hardware furniture.







In the master bedroom, taupe and lavender harmonize with an ivory bed-curtain treatment of crisply pleated Shabby Lin Délavé linen by Pierre Frey. For a dash of European drama, McDonald used Veneto linen by Quadrille on the headboard and bed skirt and as an accent on her custom-designed armchairs covered in Castel's Cora fabric. "It's a contemporary play on the old-world upholstery style, where the center panel of a chair might be done in a tapestry or needlepoint," the designer says. The Shagreen Sunburst mirror is from Grace Home, and the bedding is by Restoration Hardware. The walls are painted in Requisite Gray by Sherwin-Williams.

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