



NAPA VALLEY

NATURALLY Inspired

Designer Jennifer Macdonald polishes a bold new facet on the concept of Napa style.

By Maile Pingel

Photography by Paul Dyer

"This house is a fun, fresh and modern wine country home," says interior designer Jennifer Macdonald. "It truly reflects its young, vivacious family!" It also reflects its young and vivacious designer, who holds two degrees, one from University of California, Santa Cruz and the other from San Francisco's Academy of Art University. Before launching her San Anselmo firm, Jennifer Robin Interiors, in 2007, Macdonald worked with the renowned group Backen, Gillam & Kroeger Architects, and although her interiors bear the hallmarks of what we've come to know as Napa style (raw materials, earthy colors and natural light), there's something delightfully inventive about her vision. It's a bit like seeing traditional Napa through a hip Instagram filter.

The house, nestled amid the vineyards of St. Helena, serves as a weekend and holiday retreat for a busy San Francisco-based couple with young children (ages 4, 8 and 10) and a large extended family. "They asked me to

OUTSIDE PURSUITS

From left: A pathway leads to the guesthouse; the main living space, which includes the living room, dining area and kitchen, is the epitome of indoor-outdoor living. "The goal was to create harmony between the existing spaces and the outdoors," says designer Jennifer Macdonald of the St. Helena home she recently renovated with Wade Design Architects.









RESTORATIVE MEASURES

From above: "Upstairs is really all the children's play and study area, but converts to a guest suite," says Macdonald; the designer, amid the vineyards that have made the region famous. Opposite page: The living area of the great room melds custom furnishings with playful ceramics by Jonathan Adler.



PHOTOGRAPH BY CARLE STANISKY

bring a warmth to the interiors and a simple elegance; however, everything had to be extremely durable," explains Macdonald, who worked with Wade Design Architects, also of San Anselmo, to completely rework the now 3,500-square-foot residence. "They wanted a stain-proof and low-maintenance home where they could entertain, but where the kids were free to be creative and play indoors and out without any worries." The couple gravitated toward modern designs and fun colors, yet still wanted the home to reflect the region's signature style, both inside and out. Over the course of about 18 months, the house was completely transformed to meet the needs of the new owners. Up came the cold concrete floors and down went ebonized-oak flooring. Reclaimed cabinets found new life in the great room. An upstairs media room and play

space were added. The master bathroom was remodeled to make the most of its southern exposure and garden views. And in came the wraparound porches and bifolding door systems that celebrate the very reason the couple bought the home: the spectacular setting, newly enhanced by Sausalito landscape architecture firm Shades of Green.

While still working in the Napa vernacular, Macdonald, who lives in Marin with her husband and daughter, added contemporary touches like a kitchen backsplash of jade-green tiles from Heath Ceramics. "I love how simply adding the tiles made this once-boring kitchen spring to life and harmonize with the greenery outside," she says. The designer also opted for a pair of massive custom light fixtures from Dessin Fournir, whose dramatic proportions help bring down the scale of the



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main living space and unite its separate areas: the open kitchen, a central dining table and the living area. For furnishings, Macdonald sourced plush but structured sofas from Living Divani, upholstered in an outdoor fabric (in fact, outdoor fabrics were used throughout the interior, even for curtains), and reclaimed-wood tables handmade by Santa Cruz designer Gabriel Statsky. Additional artisanal pieces include hand-blocked pillows by Boston-based Seema Krish and custom lighting from New York firm Bone Simple Design. For a playful punch, Macdonald dotted rooms with Jonathan Adler ceramic accessories—a touch that makes everyone smile. For the palette, she kept mainly to neutrals, with elements of blue and orange throughout the entire house. Even a mixed-media work by Audrey Tulimiero Welch gets in on the act, greeting guests in the entryway with its intriguing orange lines.

Ultimately, it’s an ease of living that Macdonald creates, be they residential, hospitality or retail projects, and although she’s something of a Napa specialist, she’s at home in any setting. The designer recently completed a modern family beach house and is currently at work on homes in Atherton and Tahoe. “My job is to really always maximize the incredible lifestyle we have here in Northern California,” she explains. “Clients are always attracted to different styles, but in the end, it’s the indoor-outdoor living aspect that appeals to me the most.” And nowhere is that more perfectly expressed than in the new-again St. Helena home. So what do the kids think of their weekend getaway? “They’ve taken to using the balcony off their play space for impromptu after-dinner performances for guests gathered below,” she says. Clearly, the house is a runaway smash-hit. ■

WEEKEND RETREAT

The restful palette of the master bedroom both counters and complements the verdant landscape beyond the retractable doors. Opposite page: The homeowners, avid cooks, incorporated a kitchen garden in the landscaping designed by Shades of Green.



DESIGN DETAILS

TYPE
Single-family

LOCATION
St. Helena

ARCHITECTURE
Wade Design Architects
wade-design.com

INTERIORS
Jennifer Robin Interiors
jrobininteriors.com

LANDSCAPE DESIGN
Shades of Green
shadesofgreenla.com

VENDORS
Audrey Tulimiero Welch
Entryway painting
sloanm.com

Living Divani
Living room sofas
dzinestore.com

Statsky Design
Living room coffee table, dining table
statskydesign.com

Edelman Leather
Living room ottomans
edelmanleather.com

Perennials
Custom-designed master bed
perennialsfabrics.com
