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AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

THE MAGAZINE CELEBRATING LIFE IN AMERICA

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Of Juniper and Leather

THE INTERIOR DESIGNS OF JONA COLLINS

text: JONA COLLINS | photography: DAVID DUNCAN LIVINGSTON

Interior designer Jona Collins infuses a Pescadero home with western flair, using natural stone and fabrics, copper fixtures, and reclaimed juniper.

TELL US AN ANECDOTE ABOUT WHEN YOUR CREATIVE TALENT REVEALED ITSELF.

When I was about nine years old, my neighborhood friends and I would stage performances of plays in our backyard. I was in charge of making the whimsical costumes and stage sets. I took great pleasure in selecting the fabrics and color schemes for each event, especially sewing each item as well as I could at the time to fit each performer. I loved the process as well as the positive

response we all would receive. This was when I knew that being creative was what I wanted to do. My mother was a huge supportive influence. In her eyes, everything that I created was wonderful. She would sew constantly, creating amazing costumes and clothing for us. She would sew draperies or throw pillows for our bedrooms, and I remember wanting to sew like her. I approach decorating with the same hands-on creativity that was instilled in me as a child.

HOW DID YOU TRANSITION FROM SEAMSTRESS TO INTERIOR DESIGNER?

I moved to Los Angeles to begin my design education at Otis College of Art and Design. It was there that I further explored my abilities as a seamstress by working with a tailoring boutique in Santa Monica. One creative venture led to another, and I quickly progressed from designing clothing to designing furniture. Some time later, I opened a small boutique which carried clothing and accessories, and it seemed like a perfect opportunity to showcase a few of my furniture designs.

While on a trip to High Point, North Carolina, for my boutique, I met a rep for another furniture line who suggested that I take a couple of pieces to be shown at shows. I traveled all over the western states, and the furniture, which was rustic in theme, did very well. One client in particular in Scottsdale, Arizona, purchased five pieces for her new home in Pinnacle Peak and inquired about interior design services. This was the big turning point when I decided to do interior design professionally. I relocated back to the San Francisco Bay Area in 2001 and decided to finish my interior design certification, after which I started my own firm in 2003, specializing in high-end residential and commercial interior design.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT INTERIOR DESIGN?

I love all the aspects of interior design—from the ability to create beautiful, exciting spaces from something mundane, to the response I get from clients. I like commissioning artisans to create new things, and bringing my visions to reality in everything from light fixtures, bed treatments, and draperies to furniture and new layouts for walls and spaces. I enjoy planning a room down to the last detail to create spaces that flow. Custom furniture design is certainly a part of that because it allows me to create something just for that space. Being able to design the entire space, as opposed to just the furniture pieces, gives me the freedom to express my entire vision.

WHAT WERE THE CLIENTS OF THIS PESCADERO HOME LOOKING FOR?

Surprisingly, this project originally started not as an interior design project but helping



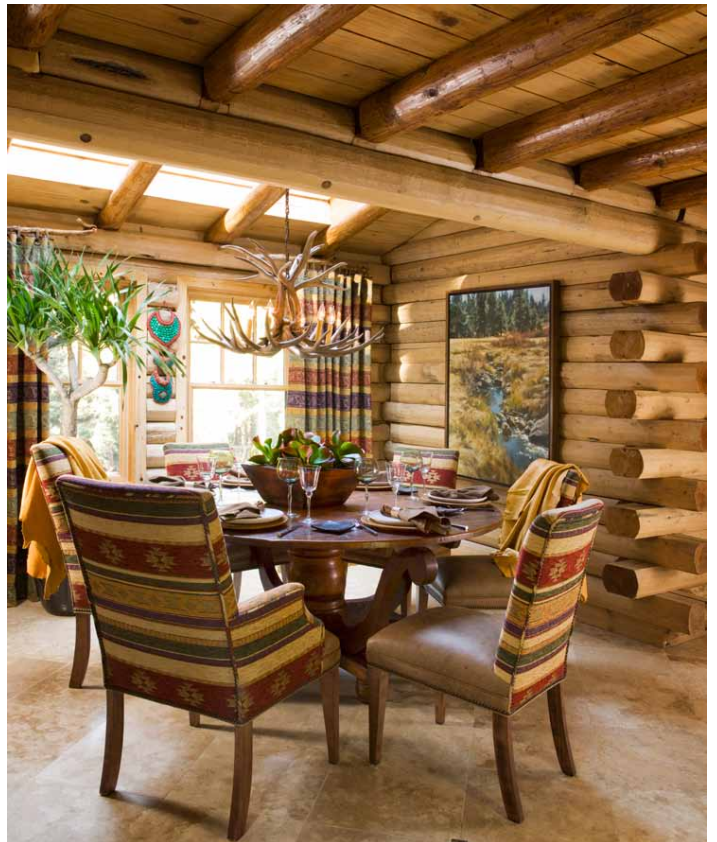
with the design and layout for a barn and answering some questions about interior furnishings. I could sense the client's frustrations as she attempted to describe what she wanted to accomplish, but she quickly felt comfortable with me and my approach. So she asked for more and more assistance from me in doing her home until it became a complete remodel.

They felt a connection to nature and the earth and wanted that reflected in their new living space. They wanted better use of the existing space with more storage. The kitchen was a modern nightmare, the other rooms were completely empty, and the style of the house seemed haphazard, so they wanted a better flow from room to room.

SUM UP THE THEME AND INSPIRATION BEHIND THIS PROJECT:

The theme and inspiration was a high-end western *Bonanza* feel with modern elements. The design also needed to be eco-friendly. This project started with the architecture, location, and fabulous surroundings—the residence is located on a horse ranch surrounded by glorious redwood trees and a running creek—and then evolved through

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insight into the clients' distinctive personalities and interests in horses, music, and the western lifestyle.

HOW DID THE DESIGN PROCESS UNFOLD?

The first project in the house was the downstairs bath, which also has a door that leads directly outside of the residence. At the end of a long, dusty day outside with the horses, they could enter the home through the spa bath, which would alleviate tracking in mud through the main portion of the house. There was enough space to create a custom bench and cabinets. A wonderful eucalyptus aroma, home spa steam shower was installed to help them relax from the stresses of the day, surrounded by natural limestone, old-world copper fixtures, and a soft, neutralized mango paint color.

The natural limestone continues throughout the home, with added elements of river rock, reclaimed juniper logs, and antique Native American beaded artwork.

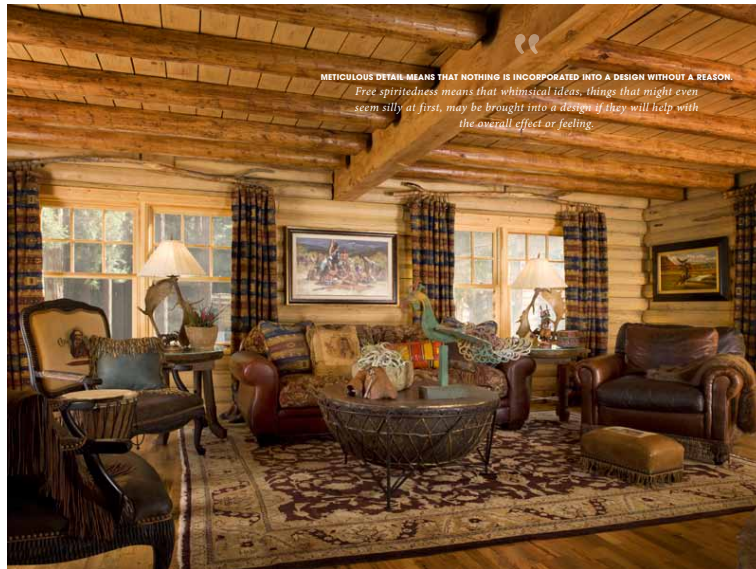
The clients' strong love for music meant the entertainment center had to house a high-end sound system. In the family room, an

entertainment center was designed in the same western motif to hold that equipment, as well as personalized music paraphernalia. Custom-designed studded and fringed furniture, a zebra-print hide, leather frames, and custom cabinetry displaying art not only added a rock star feel, it also allowed us to hide wiring for the lighting display.

The upstairs bedrooms and office contain varying levels of the themed decor, bringing continuity throughout the space. Staying true to prescribed themes proved a constant challenge as we did not want anything to appear artificial. The end result was a holistic connection to the concept—and an elegant, livable space.

HOW DID YOU COMBINE METICULOUS DETAIL AND FREE SPIRITEDNESS?

Meticulous detail means that nothing is incorporated into a design without a reason. Free spiritedness means that whimsical ideas, things that might even seem silly at first, may be brought into a design if they will help with the overall effect or feeling. I believe that if something works, it works, so I keep an open mind. Throughout the house, all



the custom cabinets have metal studs in the doors. These studs are not normally found on cabinet doors—they are supposed to be used on upholstered furniture. But they looked so good—why restrict them only to fabric sofas? Adding them as details to the wooden cabinets enhanced the rustic feel of the home and created an ambience that the clients loved.

TELL US MORE ABOUT THE GREEN DESIGN OF THIS PROJECT:

As a California native, I am naturally aware of the environmental movement and keeping

things green whenever possible. The clients were like-minded, and they wanted a natural feeling in their house. So wherever possible, when stylistic touches were added, they were made from recycled and reclaimed wood and natural products. All of the upholstered furniture that I designed are manufactured in the US for this project from woods harvested specifically for this process. The kitchen table top was created from old barn wood. Old reclaimed juniper logs were used to create the beautiful carved art for the end counter, the pull-outs at the sink, and the tree trunk table at the end

of the island (its glass top shaped to be a reflection of a treetop). Full juniper logs were used to create the staircase and the mantel. Remnants of the old juniper were used to create the drapery rods in the living room. The drapery straps in the living room that are used to tie to the juniper logs are made from old scraps of leather.

Natural fibers such as organic cotton, wool, and linen are in the bedding and draperies throughout the home. The cushions are made with postconsumer recycled polyester. In addition, we updated the lighting to





Natural fibers such as **organic cotton**, wool, and linen are in the bedding and draperies throughout the **home**.

energy-efficient LEDs throughout the home. The insulation for the home was replaced with a formaldehyde-free approved product. The oversized water heater was replaced with a Takagi tankless water system which provides a 50 percent energy savings. We also used only eco-friendly paints from Benjamin Moore.

TELL US MORE ABOUT THE ART AND SCULPTURAL PIECES IN THE HOME:

Tom Hughes is an extremely talented artist who lives and works in the San Francisco Bay Area. His art spans a broad array of themes; for this project, we selected pieces that best exemplified western and natural motifs. The original drawing of the horse in the family room is by Jane Rosen, a local artist who lives on a ranch on the California Pacific coast. She lived, worked, and exhibited in New York for twenty years before moving to California.

Inspiration from nature was the driving force that generated the idea behind the custom, wrought-iron, leaf patterned mirrors in both

bathrooms. Hand-forged steel branches and leaves frame a unique wall mirror. Each branch and leaf is forged with a variety of welding processes, then tapered and textured with hand tools. The steel is sandblasted and finished with a dark reddish-brown patina.

The carved wooden chair in the family room was custom designed by a craftsman in Boise, Idaho, whom I met during a scouting trip to the Northwest.

While in Wyoming, I had the wonderful opportunity to view the works of a Native American artist who created lovely beaded and hand-painted leather bags and pieces of art. I couldn't resist picking up a few items for this project.

DID YOU HAVE TO OVERCOME ANY OBSTACLES DURING THIS PROJECT?

The location of the residence is in a very remote area. The hood arrived via truck from Texas, and at the last minute, they refused to take it to the residence because the location

was not on the map. I was in continuous contact with the driver, and he told me that they would be dropping the \$10,000 hood off at the local post office parking lot five to seven miles away. My client was panicking! I quickly decided to meet the driver quite a ways out where I suggested if he brought the hood all the way to the house, he would be treated to a fabulous country lunch. To my relief, he said yes. It helped us to appreciate the final outcome even more, and it especially made me realize that a courteous approach can get you far.

HOW DO YOU KEEP YOUR DESIGNS FRESH?

I keep things fashion forward. I am intrigued by the new and different. I like to use a mixture of unique pieces and antiques, which were either designed by myself or collected from far and wide, and this allows me to tailor a one-of-a-kind look on each new project. I continually challenge myself and my creative vision. Each project takes me to a new, exciting level of creative energy and direction filled with the latest fabrics or a different technique from a new artisan that I have researched—for example, a different approach on a carving in wood. I don't restrict myself to a small set of vendors and suppliers for my items. I travel out of the area to find artists and artisans who can create unique items that will fit into a space. For example, the oversized, reclaimed wood chair in this house was from someone I met on a scouting trip to Wyoming.

SHED SOME INSIGHT ABOUT YOURSELF OUTSIDE OF THE DESIGN FIELD:

I live a simple life. My amazing mare keeps me grounded, and my fifteen-year-old border collie constantly keeps me on my toes. I have a tremendous love of the philanthropic projects that I have been involved with, such as my work with the National Center for Equine Facilitated Therapy. As a volunteer, I walk next to the riders or lead horses during class, where I provide physical and emotional support to the riders during their sessions. I also assist in production of various fundraisers. I enjoy art galleries—I am preparing to take a trip to France and beyond to view some of the amazing castles and galleries.

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