

# A Gracious Space

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An interior designer pours her expertise into her own home and invigorates British colonial style with bright colors and patterns.







## *The thought of interiors that've been untouched for 30 years might be daunting to some—*

but that wasn't the case for Roxanne Hughes Packham. When she first surveyed the Santa Rosa Valley house that she and her husband would call home, she wasn't intimidated by the 1970s cabinets, the lack of woodwork or ceiling details, or even the walls in every room featuring various shades of orange paint. Instead, she says, "I saw through to the bones of the home ... plus, the view was incredible." Of course, as the owner and designer of Sunset and Magnolia Design, she had just the right credentials to turn the orange-hued home into the perfect empty-nester retreat. With a love for artisanal craftsmanship inherited from her grandfather, a passion for fabrics honed at the Paris Fashion Institute and years of traveling in Europe, she poured all her expertise into her home. "One of the things I love about design is the way we can incorporate things we love into the very essence of the building," Roxanne says. "I did that in every space, and it's now just the right home for my husband, our children home visiting from college and our very spoiled Shih Tzu, Samson."

**[ABOVE LEFT] COLOR SMARTS.** Blue is a happy pop of color seen throughout the home in various shades. Roxanne especially likes it in a navy incarnation, saying, "navy blue is so neutral and classic. It is very durable as well, because you cannot see dirt." This is especially important with little paws—Samson can enjoy the home without leaving too much of a trace!

**[OPPOSITE] STYLISH STORAGE.** Old suitcases reflect Roxanne's love of traveling and provide a chic storage option—right in plain sight. The console is an antique and once belonged to Clark Gable!



**GATHER ROUND.** For Roxanne, the shape of furnishings is an important consideration in the flow of a room. "I usually like a round table for a breakfast nook," she says. "But it didn't work for this room, so I went for a beloved antique French table that I got from my mom."



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**NATURAL INTEREST.** Unexpected new textures bring a sense of wonder and anticipation to guests visiting Roxanne's home. In the family room, she introduces faux animal-hide touches that are as functional as they are fascinating. "They are 100% polyester, so I can scrub it if need be," she says.







**BUILT FOR ENTERTAINING.** Roxanne describes the kitchen as a “workhorse.” Since they love entertaining and her husband enjoys cooking, it was essential for their lifestyle. She equipped it with two dishwashers, a bar and a separate coffee-and-drink area so they don’t have to set up before each event. Another essential? Storage for silverware. “I cannot use plastic silverware,” she explains. “I’m from a family of silversmiths, so I draw the line. I also love beautiful plates and my grandfather’s (Allan Adler Silversmith) silver brings me joy, especially when I use it to serve others.”

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#### FORMALLY INVITED

The home has a traditional British colonial feel. Roxanne says, “British colonial is a great design style because it can encompass things from all over the world, though ours has more bright colors.” The global touches allow her to share stories of her travels without saying a word, as with, for example, the handmade South African chandelier hanging in the dining room. The chandelier was made by women and children suffering from AIDS. “The shipping was expensive, as you can imagine,” Roxanne says. “But my clients and I love that while we are making our homes beautiful, we are also making a difference in others’ lives as well.”

Along with the Ikat print drapes, the chandelier is the focal point of the dining room, which Roxanne specifically sought to make formal. “My grandfather was a silversmith who specialized in silver, so we always had ‘formal’ dinners growing up,” she says. “Mind you, it could have been canned peaches, but it was on china with good silver.” She created an elegant dining room with Thibaut grasscloth walls, wainscoting and leather chairs slipcovered on the top in white linen. The result is a room that’s breezy yet communicates a sophistication that draws guests in. “I love the idea of honoring every person who joins us at our table,” Roxanne says. “I do this by sharing the beauty of slowing down and enjoying a beautifully set table.”



**FABRIC AFFAIR.** After falling in love with textiles while studying at the Paris Fashion Institute, Roxanne made the drapes the focal point of the dining room. “I think every room needs drapes to frame the windows and complete the room,” she says. “Since I love beautiful fabric, it was another excuse to use it. I was careful because of the gorgeous view and didn’t block even one inch of windows with the drapes.”





**BE OUR GUEST.** Three different bedrooms have distinct looks yet flow harmoniously with the house. For her daughter's room, Roxanne sought to make a cozy space, especially since she is often studying for her graduate work. For her son, Roxanne incorporated a transportation theme with framed photos of her grandfather's boat along with images of him on planes and trains. "Since he brings home friends, we have lots of guest beds, just for that reason," she says.



**|OPPOSITE RIGHT| TOKENS FROM THE PAST.** This bathroom, which is used by her visiting grown children, has a sweet detail: blue and white sinks purchased when Roxanne was only 23. “We saved them for this house, our ‘dream’ house we used to call it,” she says. “We bought them in Triana, Seville, in the south of Spain. They were 30 years old when we put them in. I love that I thought ahead!”

**|OPPOSITE FAR RIGHT| PERSONAL RETREAT.** This dreamy space is located in the master bedroom and is tucked against the bay window. It’s a daybed that’s ideal for reading or seeking refuge from, as Roxanne laughingly says, a much-loved yet snoring-inclined husband.



## Sunset & Magnolia *Style*

Roxanne specializes in creating rooms with texture, depth and cohesion. How does she do it? Here are her top five tips for making a gracious space.

- 1. Welcoming Ambience:** “I always want people to feel welcome in the spaces I design,” Roxanne says. She begins with the selection of beautiful fabrics, noting that “in your home all your fabrics should really make you happy and want to spend time there.”
- 2. Consistency and Harmonious Flow.** “Some element of consistency throughout the home makes the style flow effortlessly from one room to another,” she says. In her home, it’s the white woodwork.
- 3. Dark Wood and Black Furniture:** Roxanne loves dark woods because they are elegant, timeless and grounding. Her suggestion? Have one piece of black furniture in every room. Not only does it add weight to the space, but silver, ceramic lamps and crystal are gorgeous when displayed on black furnishings.

- 4. Texture:** “To achieve warmth and a welcoming vibe, I incorporate woven pieces or rattan,” Roxanne says. “You can add texture in baskets, sisal rugs, cable-knit blankets, embroidered pillows, grasscloth wall coverings or nubby woven upholstery fabric on a chair.” She adds that texture provides depth and dimension to a room.
- 5. Silver and Flowers:** Enchant guests with a sparkling silver tray or bowl and a crystal vase filled with flowers or greenery. Roxanne also adds that “silver frames [containing] treasured people on a dark piece of wood furniture is a fabulous way to welcome people into your space, whether it be your entryway hall, reception area or simply a welcoming hall table.”





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**STAYCATION VIBES.** “Hotel room on vacation” is the phrase Roxanne uses for her master bedroom inspiration. “Since I work with color and space all the time, this was the one room I wanted to feel clean and airy,” she says. She went for sophisticated furnishings and a touch of cinematic whimsy: The mosquito netting was inspired by the movie *Out of Africa*.

#### SCALED SPACE

When Roxanne toured the living room, she noticed that the ceiling was “crying out” for a little detail. Painted faux beams were just the right thing and, while she was at it, she also painted the ’70s brick and wood-paneled fireplace white, which visually shrank it to scale with the rest of the room. “I think the huge fireplace scared and stumped the other prospective buyers,” she says. “But as soon as I saw it, I knew I would paint it white.” She also played with scale in other ways by artfully hanging the curtain rods an extra foot above the windows. “It makes the room feel taller,” she says.

When it came to styling, she followed her instincts, prioritizing her sense of art over any technical approach. “For the mix-and-match throw pillows and different patterns on the furniture, rug and ottoman, I am instinctual,” she says. “I make sure they feel good together, rather than matching colors. If I love the fabric, then I use it, which is always the same advice I give my clients.”



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**PROJECT MANAGED.** Since Roxanne is an expert herself, she knew how to tackle her new home. While homeowners often see their projects take longer than anticipated, she was able to do the entire house, inside and out, in just three months. “I know how contractors do the best work, in terms of time and budget,” she says. “So I knew how to get what I needed and when.”



#### BREAKFAST WITH A VIEW

With the Santa Monica mountains on the horizon, Roxanne made sure her design decisions allowed for ample enjoyment of the view, whether from indoors or outside. “In our breakfast nook, we made sure the room was very open,” she says. “The doors lead to a large deck, and they are propped open most of the time.” And, when nature is a bit intense (the room can get very hot due to its position relative to the sun), lined drapes can be drawn for comfort. Roxanne also used open-back chairs to leave the mountain range unobstructed and continued the neutral color scheme seen throughout the home, saying, “with the neutral palette, the only color is from the sky outside.” For styling, she used an antique French table and chairs along with white cushions.

There’s a lot of wood in the breakfast nook—the doors, floors, table and chairs—yet Roxanne boldly combined it all together. “My secret is that I never match,” she says. “The melding of different patinas is beautiful. I always lean toward darker woods, with a brown or black tone rather than a warm tone, because that tends to yellow and not age as well.” Now, she and her husband can enjoy coffee in the presence of the mountains every morning.

Roxanne says that her goal, whether working for clients or her own family, is to create gracious spaces to gather. Whether she’s welcoming guests, spending time with her husband or having their children visiting from college, every space of the home is most gracious and the perfect place to gather. 

**SOFT SURROUNDINGS.** Durability, utility and comfort were the priorities for this outdoor dining space, along with gorgeous textiles. Since Roxanne has an abiding love of fabrics, she made sure to incorporate them into her outdoor living spaces with cushions and throw pillows.

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