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MODERN COUNTRY

For newlyweds with opposite tastes, designer Sasha Emerson creates a happy marriage of styles in this Santa Monica cottage

Midcentury modern rules this roost, anchored by bold orange leather chairs from Lawson-Fenning and a Danish sofa redone in a graphic wood-grain pattern that speaks to the trees beyond. "We fell in love with the chairs, and everything played off them," says owner Heidi Hertel (left).

“It’s not jarring to go from a bright blue room to a bright orange room because the black and white backgrounds unify the space”

—DESIGNER SASHA EMERSON





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oving from a pristine white loft into a new home with his bride-to-be unleashed Greg Hodes' need for more color in his life. "I wanted to brighten

things up," says the former New York corporate attorney turned film/television agent. "It was time for a change." Just how much change, however, would be a big topic of discussion with his fiancé, political consultant Heidi Hertel, in the months leading up to their wedding.

Greg dreamed of a contemporary beach house. Heidi wanted a more formal coastal home with an East Coast vibe. He loves pop art; she prefers muted landscapes. The matrimonial merge had all the makings of a knock-down, drag-out reality show episode. Then the young couple stumbled upon their perfect starter house—a 1930s cottage with storybook Dutch doors and ceiling-high windows that reminded Heidi of her East Coast roots but also had enough features to satisfy Greg's taste for all things modern.

The three-bedroom home's quirky history as a one-time carriage house and stable certainly made the property alluring. But for this couple, the all-important bonus feature of living close to the ocean near Santa Monica is what made moving in a no-brainer. Plus, the white brick walls, exposed wooden rafters, and tongue-and-groove paneling make the house an ideal setting for Heidi and Greg to combine their styles. "It's a country cottage and a modern beach house all rolled into one," says Heidi.

Having settled on a location, the couple tackled their next challenge: decorating the house in a manner that reflects each of their aesthetics but also feels like a cohesive whole. Sasha Emerson, a Los Angeles decorator known for freshening up stark modern looks with color and flair, proved right for the job.

Sasha designed the living room's charcoal pinstriped sofa as a giant wingback chair and collected other chair shapes, such as a pair of blackened Danish modern chairs upholstered in a stamped linen from Raoul Textiles.



“In his single days, Greg would have decked the place in black, gray, and cream,” says Sasha. “Heidi would have made it girly, vibrant, and country.” So the designer met them in the middle by splashing a riot of bold fabrics and accessories—from bright yellows and cool blues to juicy oranges and reds—onto a backdrop of black-and-white basics like ebonized furnishings and white walls. The effect is both refined and playful, a look Sasha describes as “fun/modern/pseudo-country.”

The designer’s recipe for the look mixes midcentury pieces with classically tailored furnishings and adds a

dash of contemporary, graphic floral pattern in every serving. In the living room, a statement-making floral rug sets a boisterous stage for the blue-on-blue theme. From royal to gray to powder, the hues provide a cool counterpoint for the adjacent orange sitting room. It might sound like color overload, but “it’s not jarring to go from a bright blue room to a bright orange room, because the black-and-white backgrounds unify the space,” Sasha explains.

In the sunny media room, once the horse stable (still with a drain in the floor), color goes full throttle, taking its cue from a striped fabric by Christopher Farr. Sasha reinvented Greg’s old sofa with a bold green fabric and pile of funky vintage print pillows. But when it came time to decorate the master bedroom, Sasha convinced the couple to go with more muted mauves and grays. As much as the designer loves bold shades, she believes the bedroom should be a chill-out zone.

As for Greg and Heidi, they’ve settled into their new digs with ease. The place exemplifies their shared desire for a casual, relaxed place to hang out and entertain friends. Best of all? “Sasha made the stressful parts of planning a wedding and setting up a house fun,” says Heidi. “There’s something so romantic about being a witness to that passage in life,” adds Sasha. “That’s why I wanted to choose pieces that would help them see who they are together. It’s such a charming compromise.”



■ **POWDER ROOM** Canary yellow paint brightens up the sink console, and the large-scale, black-and-white floral wallpaper makes the tiny space feel bigger. Sasha finished off the room with inexpensive brass sconces painted matte black and a 1960s decoupage mirror.

■ **MEDIA ROOM** The striped fabric on the curvaceous 1970s chair inspired the media room’s playful palette. A pleated skirt on the bright green sofa hides casters that Sasha added so it can swivel easily to accommodate larger crowds.

■ **KITCHEN** “I’m not much of a cook,” admits Heidi, “but this kitchen has inspired me to start learning.” A previous owner’s worn-out black cabinets and mirrored backsplashes received a fresh coat of deep green-black paint and custom tile in shades of green, gold, and turquoise from Mission Tile West.



ON THE HOUSE

STYLE 1930s clapboard carriage house and former stable

SPACE 3,300-square-foot U-shaped cottage with industrial casement windows and sliding doors that surround a palm tree-filled garden and courtyard

SETTING one of L.A.'s hippest neighborhoods, just a few minutes from the beach

VIEW greenery galore and, from the backyard hilltop on a clear day, the Pacific Ocean

“It’s a country cottage and a modern beach house all rolled into one”

—HOMEOWNER HEIDI HERTEL

“All the color and patterns play well together because the house is spacious, light-filled, and uncluttered” —DESIGNER SASHA EMERSON





COASTAL CONFIDENTIAL

SASHA'S COLOR SECRETS

Q How do you make all those colors feel unified, rather than chaotic?

A They play well together because the house is spacious, light-filled, and uncluttered. There's a lot of room between objects to let your eyes adjust. And the house is primarily white, so despite the zaniness, there's harmony.

Q We see a ton of pillows here, and hardly any two alike. Is that one of your signatures?

A A client of mine once said, "What is it with you and pillows?" They are some of my favorite things to make and buy, and they can tie disparate elements together. I often find fabrics that are great scraps of vintage pieces, or I want to use an amazing fabric that's too expensive for us to do anything else with. Some of my favorite pillow sources are Calypso Home, Poppycotton, and Henry Road.

Q We love how you marry cool and quirky with California warmth. What's your secret?

A I'm from New York and New England, but I've lived in California for more than 20 years. California is a state of mind. Heidi is from D.C., and Greg's from New York, so being cosmopolitan and urban reflects who they are. We gave them a loft sensibility in a rural carriage house. One of their friends saw it as a hip version of *Green Acres*.

Q You've done all of the walls in your own "special white." Why leave them color-free?

A There are many whitewashed bricks and funny angles—elements that would be too choppy in color. I had a theory that any color in the wrong place would transport us to 1973, to those Woodstock farmhouses. We'd have to break out the Lancers wine and a fondue pot! 🍷

Sources: page 120

A palette of gray, mauve, navy, and purple keeps the master bedroom serene, while the Victoria Hagan curtain fabric adds a vibrant pattern. The Dash & Albert rug is almost as easy on the wallet as it is on the eyes.