

Montecito





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ith her love of beautiful objects—

whether rare Georgian furniture, humble woven baskets, aged garden urns, Italian painted furniture, or contemporary tole flowers—not to mention her passion for plush velvets, faded chintzes, printed linens, and intricate paisleys and ikats, it would be hard to consider Suzanne Rheinstein a minimalist. Such was her passion for finding and sharing beauty that her store, Hollyhock, was for decades one of Los Angeles's most prestigious design emporiums, and its wares, ranging from unique vintage finds to works by contemporary artisans, were incorporated into a shockingly high percentage of the city's most stunning homes.

And yet Rheinstein's rooms never overwhelm. Quite the contrary. Increasingly over the years, the spaces she creates have become ever more spare and serene. In her rooms, atmosphere and light take precedence, time slows down, contemplation comes naturally, and beauty is allowed space to breathe. Each item is considered, set off to its best effect, but the totality is far more powerful than any single element.

PREVIOUS SPREADS: The entry and facade of Suzanne Rheinstein's retreat in Montecito. The house was originally built in the early 1970s and was revamped by the designer with architects Richard Bories and James Shearson to create a simple, low-slung structure where the volumes, textures, and natural light would predominate. New whitewashed stone walls enclose the entry in the gravel forecourt, and the mature *Metrosideros* tree and Roman pines on the property were retained. OPPOSITE: In the entry, Spanish colonial cooking pots on stands are placed atop a seventeenth-century Portuguese table. The Etruscan wine urn came from Tom Stansbury Antiques, and the composite torso, a fragment of what was once an Italian figural grouping, was found at Karla Katz Antiques in New Orleans. The floors throughout are pale oak.



This is true for every project in this book, yet there is no better exemplar of her ability to conjure supremely refined relaxation than her own getaway in Montecito.

Rheinstein had long been hoping to find a house in the area, but the desire became even more intense after an accident in the fall of 2013 shattered her foot and elbow and left her immobile for months. “I was in the hospital, coming out of surgery, when I saw photographs of the place, and a floor plan,” she says. “The house hit the market on a Friday, and that Sunday I put in a bid without even seeing it.”

What attracted her was neither the design of the house, which had been built in 1971, nor its condition, which she frankly describes as “in pretty horrible shape,” but the property itself, and the setting. “The place has fantastic views of the Santa Ynez mountains. It was sad and overgrown, but there was a huge backyard with a circular pool—perfect for senior synchronized swimming,” she says, joking.

For help, she turned to the team of Richard Bories and James Shearron, whose work she admired, and who had worked with her daughter, Kate. The architects retained the footprint of the house, but totally transformed its look, managing to find within its 1970s Fire Island aesthetic the ghost of a more appropriate form, echoing the early Spanish vernacular intrinsic to Montecito. Now the pale stucco-clad forms seem to hug the landscape, as clean-lined and strong as a modernist sculpture.

Because this was an entirely personal project, Rheinstein could adapt the interior to her desires and needs, ignoring conventions. So, there is no dining room: “One thing I knew for sure about this house is that I wouldn’t be giving any formal

OPPOSITE AND FOLLOWING SPREAD: The walls inside and out are covered in a hand-applied integrally colored plaster. The living room walls change color throughout the day and are hung with a group of pochoirs from the Antipolis series by Picasso. The light fixture is by Giancarlo Valle, the table is from Gerald Bland, and the English Regency chairs are painted *en grisaille*. The slipper chairs are upholstered in a Carolina Irving stripe with hemp fringe, and the chaise longue is eighteenth-century French in the Louis XIII style.







OPPOSITE: A drawing of an enlarged epiphyte by Sarah Graham hangs over a Portuguese library table with distinctive baluster legs. The sofa is inspired by one in the Palazzo Mariano Fortuny, and the bronze-and-lacquer coffee table is Rheinstein's design, crafted by Quintus. ABOVE: In a corner of the living room, a Tuscan table holds a group of ceramic pots and hyacinths by Kaori Tatebayashi. Above it hangs a work on paper with punctures, *Concerto Spaziale*, by Lucio Fontana; the stools are Swedish.



ABOVE: The Romanesque stone lions looking in from the garden are from the Puglia region and date to the twelfth through the thirteenth century. OPPOSITE: The antique stone sink in the powder room was one of the first pieces Rheinstein bought for the house. The sink and fittings are from Compas, the antique mirror is Portuguese, and the sconces are by Paul Ferrante.



dinners,” she says with a laugh. But there is an expansive flower arranging room off the garden. What had been the guest room became her primary bedroom: “So now I can lie in bed and see the mountains.” The kitchen chairs are all on wheels because her three granddaughters love to scoot around on them.

The living room contains her signature mix of eras and origins, with boldly sculptural Portuguese furniture mixing with antique Italian mirrors, African spears, Etruscan wine vessels, plush, pale upholstery, and modern art by Pablo Picasso and Lucio Fontana. The den is fitted out with a custom banquette perfect for lounging, and the first television she has ever had mounted over the fireplace. “It’s where I spend time alone in the winter,” she says, and considers the room her “cabinet of curiosities,” fitted out with Giorgio Morandi prints, Japanese brush pots, and architectural fragments from India.

What had been the dining room became the reading room, centered by a raised mattress she calls her “Princess and the Pea bed,” where she loves to sprawl with her granddaughters, who share her love of reading. The wall over the fireplace is adorned with plates from Robert Kime, faded, mottled, and adorned with encrustations after having spent a century or more under the ocean after the ship that was transporting them sank.

Each detail is considered, with color and texture as important as shape. The monochromatic plaster walls are the color of palest sand, which seems to change throughout the day as the sun moves across the sky and clouds drift in and out. The

OPPOSITE: In the reading room, low bookcases flank stacked mattresses covered in Rheinstein’s Indian Zag fabric. The plates over the fireplace, from Robert Kime, were rescued from a sunken ship. Once blue and white, they now feature beautiful encrustations from being buried at sea for two hundred years. The chairs are vintage rattan, and the artworks include a Picasso pochoir and ink drawings by Dug Uyesaka, left, and a painting by Kinuko Imai Hoffman, right.





ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: The reading room looks out onto the pool and garden. The eighteenth-century Italian faux-painted storage columns were found in New Orleans. Nepalese iron cooking pots hold foliage from the trees outside. The painted chair is English Regency.



furnishings and objects all stand out strongly against the simple planes and barely-there color. That prominence justified her in indulging in hand-cast brass hardware and iron latches from van Cronenburg, a foundry in Ghent, Belgium. Though she is no snob, and happily incorporated light fixtures from Pottery Barn and accessories from RH: “I always say, go Rolex or go Timex. It’s the middle of the road that’s the kiss of death.”

As with all her projects, the outside was as important as any of the rooms within, so Rheinstein enlisted the help of her old friend Nancy Goslee Power, a renowned garden designer based in Santa Monica. The circular pool was replaced with an elegant rectangular lap pool set off with, on one side, yellow-painted wicker lounge chairs on an expanse of gravel, and lush perennial beds enclosed by a hedge of Japanese blueberry on the other. Every room opens to the outdoors. A pergola topped by a screen of bamboo softens the abundant sunlight, with an outdoor fireplace and custom banquette at one end, where Rheinstein spends many evenings.

William Morris famously said, “Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful.” Rheinstein’s house in Montecito is such a success because here each item fits both criteria. Like a Matisse cutout or a late Joan Mitchell drawing, the place stands as a distillation of her art, evidence of her hard-won knowledge of who she is, what she loves, and how she wants to live. It is a very personal work by a master who had nothing to prove, no one to please but herself, and only the joy of her creativity to express.

OPPOSITE: In the kitchen, the pendant light came from a 1960s restaurant, via Richard Shapiro’s gimlet eye, and was powder-coated the same color as the walls. The table is by Sawkille, and the works over it by Richard Smith were found at J.F. Chen. The island of smooth basalt stone contrasts with the roughly textured paneling behind it.



RIGHT: The den, the only room that is painted (in Farrow & Ball's Mouse's Back) is cozy for watching television on a set designed by Yves Béhar. It is fitted out with a custom banquette with mattresses that can also serve for extra guests. The inlaid Moroccan table is from Indigo Seas, and the painting is by Kinuko Imai Hoffman.





OPPOSITE AND ABOVE: Rheinlein considers the den her “cabinet of curiosities” and has filled the shelves with Indian architectural fragments, Japanese brush pots, and contemporary ceramics by Andrew Wicks. The prints are from the Giorgio Morandi estate, and the chair is French.



LEFT: In the bath, the shower is lined with zellige tiles from Morocco. The sconces are by Paul Ferrante, and the contemporary mirror was found online.

Distilled Wisdom

- Fewer things, but better ones. Buy one good object a year—whether it's an antique table or a contemporary ceramic vase or a worn, early wicker chair with great lines. In ten years, you will have a strong collection of pieces that will add character to your rooms.
- Once you have assembled a personal collection of one-of-a-kind pieces of furniture and objects, you can shift your rooms from neutrals to brights, from minimally arranged to chock-full o' furniture, and on and on, without ever losing your distinct personality and point of view.
- Consider appropriateness. Try to truly understand how you actually live each day, and how you aim to use your new or revamped rooms.
- Let details reveal themselves over time. Not every room, object, color, or fabric needs to shout "wow." If a room is inviting and comfortable, you will spend more time there, and as the days go by, you will continue to discover great delights.
- Make sure some rooms have a sense of calm—so important with everyone leading such busy lives.
- Curation is as important as choice. How things are put together is crucial. A myriad of nationalities and periods is often more interesting. But sometimes, you need to gather like with like and showcase them all together.

OPPOSITE: The flower arranging room is fitted out with custom oak cabinetry, a granite sink, and a zinc countertop. The pendant light is from Lars Bolander. The room is the last stop on the way out to the garden, so hats, clippers, and totes are all at hand.



- As a design force, texture is undervalued. Go for rough against smooth, nubby handwoven fabrics, velvets, plaster, sisal and straw, shiny lacquer, and worn and waxed woods.
- Always remember that comfort is key. Whether a room is minimalist and neutral or jam-packed and full of color, the same needs apply. Always make sure to have good lighting for reading and conversations, small tables at hand for drinks, a layout that permits easy maneuverability, and generous spaces between pieces.
- Light in a room comes not just from windows and lamps. So many materials can amplify and beautify light—mirrors (I love them aged), gilt accessories, lacquer, and bronze.
- Painted floors enrich and brighten a room, especially in pale colors and simple geometric patterns.
- Broaden your approach to accessories. Unusual objects can be used in unexpected ways. Regency hot water urns become vases, braziers serve as bar trays, Asian lacquered boxes on stands can act as small tables. There's no need to settle for the ordinary when something unexpected can add real interest.
- Outdoor spaces should have the comfort, ease, and beauty of those indoors, with inviting seating, pillows, sturdy tables, candlelight lanterns, and plants in beautiful containers.
- Go Rolex or go Timex. Both offer excellent value. Going down the middle is the kiss of death.

OPPOSITE: In the passage leading to the main bedroom, a “corkiage” mirror commissioned from Marian McEvoy hangs over a seventeenth-century English Jacobean chest with its original base. The hardware throughout the house is by van Cronenburg, hand forged in Belgium.



RIGHT: In the primary bedroom, a steel bed, originally designed for and sold at Hollyhock, is dressed in the palest blush-colored glazed linen from Rose Tarlow. The settee and ottoman are covered in a hand-blocked linen used on the wrong side. The faux-stone columns and painted cabinet are Swedish, the console in front of the window is quirky Peruvian, via Italian cabinetmakers, and the 1930s tufted chairs are from J.F. Chen.





ABOVE: A 1930s wrought-iron daybed in the private garden off the primary bedroom.
OPPOSITE: The painted cabinet in the bath is Swedish, and the side table is a bronze casting of a Louis XV table.



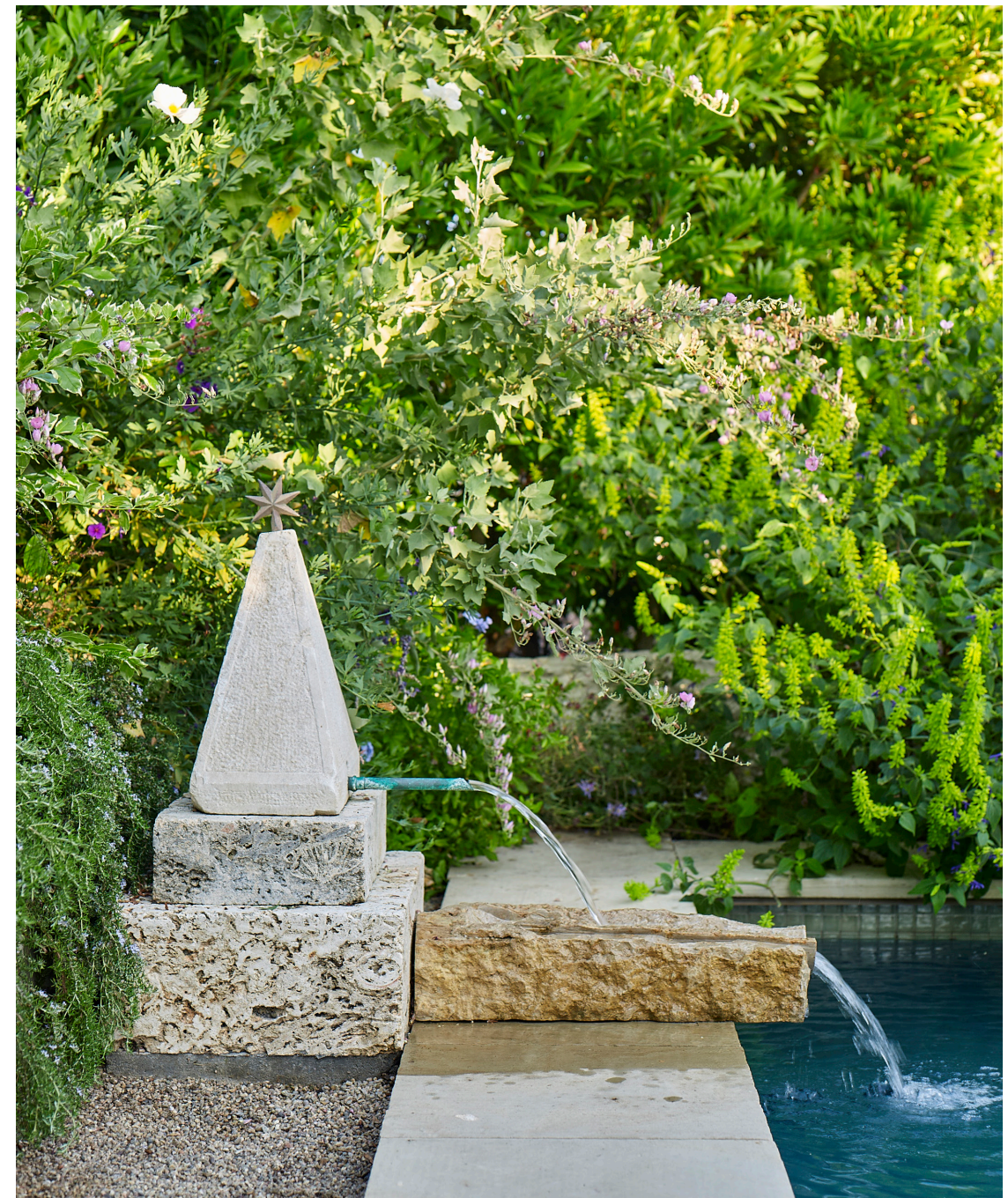


RIGHT: The guest bed is upholstered in a Rosa Bernal fabric and is flanked by antique Italian painted cabinets. The Continental tapestry and the Italian settee are from Tom Stansbury Antiques.



ABOVE: A head of carved tufa from southern Italy, which Rheinstein refers to as her "Sicilian sage," is backed by a hedge of rosemary. OPPOSITE: The pergola is shaded by a roof of bamboo and quick-growing honeysuckle. The chairs are vintage rattan.





OPPOSITE: The outdoor fireplace makes this corner an ideal spot to gather on cool evenings. The built-in banquette is a wonderful place to read or look out at the Santa Ynez mountains. ABOVE: The antique Italian stone fountain head with an iron star was found by Rheinstein years ago, knowing that one day it would find its perfect place. FOLLOWING PAGES: The garden was designed by Nancy Goslee Power, inspired by the work of Spanish garden designer Alvaro de la Rosa and the lush plantings of Dutch designer Piet Oudolf. A hedge of Japanese blueberry barely contains an overflowing bed of Matilija poppies, salvia mexicana 'Limelight', verbena, plumbago, geranium 'Rozanne', and numerous other plants. The lounge chairs are from Anthropologie.

