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VERY PERSON THAT HAS LIVED IN THIS house was an artist," says Lori Gentile. "The owner before me taught art classes on the deck. Even the builder was himself an architect who also dabbled in sand castles and became well-known for them."

Gentile, an interior designer that has worked with other major designers such as Barbara Ann Barber, Yolanda Ahne, Dawn Kearney and Curtis House, had spent more than a year looking for something "other than a tract house that would be really private." What she found was a 1967 home designed like a "tree house" with the main living areas soaring above the yard.

"I don't know if anyone else would have wanted this house," Gentile says of the property located in an Encinitas neighborhood where there are no sidewalks or street lights. "You had to have vision to see beyond the state it was in. But I knew instantly that this house had a lot of soul and just the kind of vibe I had been looking for."

Gentile's design philosophy is that a home should reflect the heart and soul of the family that lives in it. It should be "a cocoon where you feel free to restore the balance between mind and body. An environment in which you can surround yourself with treasured belongings, where you feel sense of self, and where your family and friends love to gather."

In the entry, Gentile replaced the original bottle-glass door with diffused glass framed in walnut, and created a calm, clean space with unpolished slate leading to a walnut-planked staircase. She also capped the rails in walnut and hung a pendant light made of capiz shells from the Philippines to complement a painting that she picked up during a trip to Bali.

*by Rowena Kelley
photography by Jim Brady*

POST-MODERN ZEN





INSPIRATION, SHE SAYS, COMES FROM clients themselves. And since she was her own client this time, Gentile knew exactly what she wanted—a peaceful, casual place to share with Tai, her 11-year-old Samoyed. The home's mid-century architecture called for clean lines, which Gentile complemented with Asian antiques. She spent three months renovating both floors of the 1,900-square-foot house. She installed walnut flooring in varying widths throughout the home—including the staircase, updated the lighting and plumbing, and warmed up the vaulted white ceiling. The result is post-modern Zen.

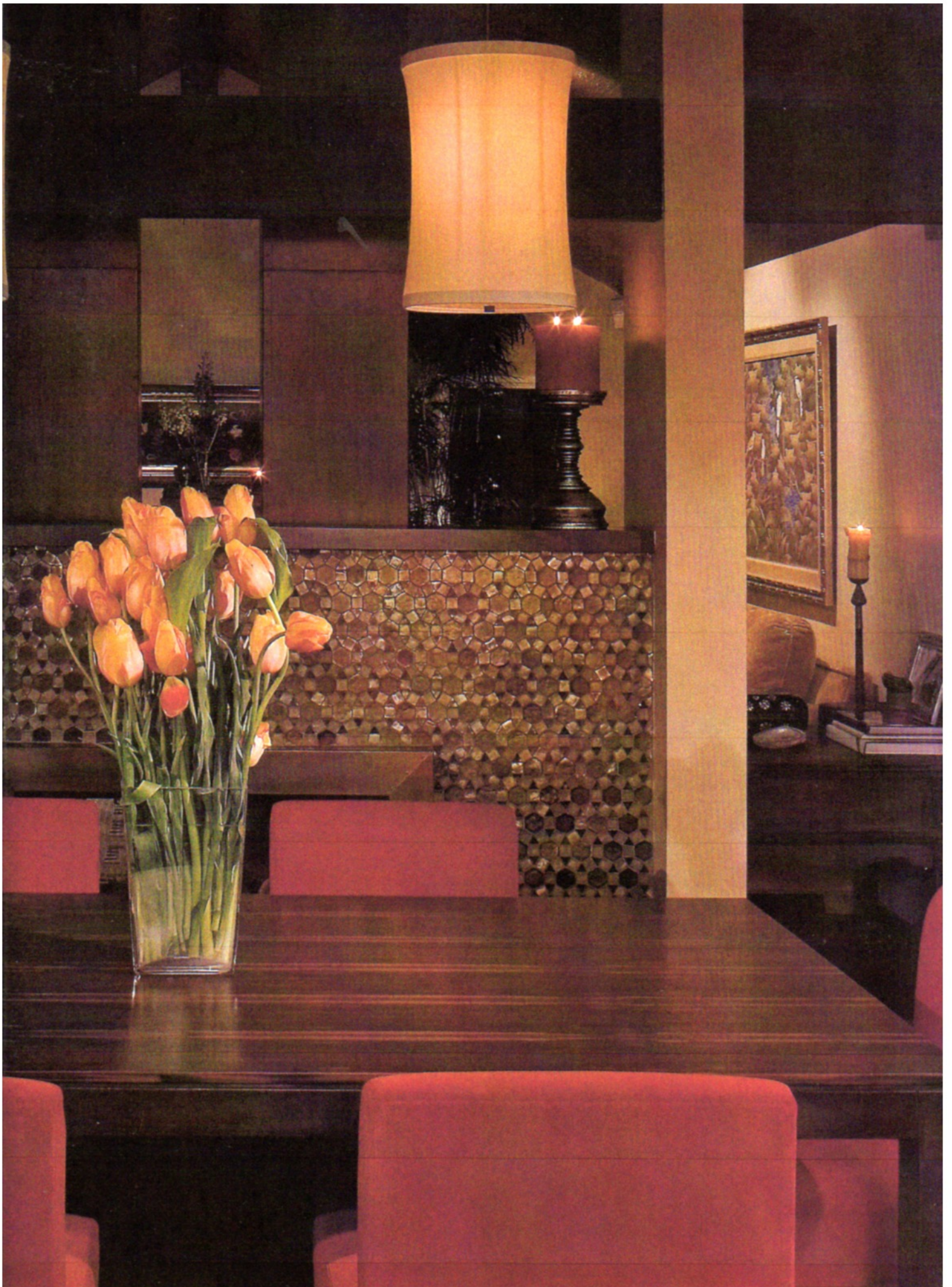
"I knew I wanted to create spaces that would quietly talk to my soul while reflecting who I really am," Gentile says. "I couldn't sleep the night I arrived here. I was up all night drawing, designing and planning. I ended up gutting all but the fireplace to create a look that is the new modern—exotic woods and clean lines with a little bit of ethnic mixed in."

Gentile also had a head start in that, eight months before even finding the house, she had already fallen in love with a new glass tile at Unique Stone Imports. *Meridian Hexagon* by Oceanside Glass blends pewter, bronze and green colors into a pattern that "sparkles like wet sand." Gentile knew she had to have it, and immediately found use for it in her new home—she used it to give the existing fireplace a major facelift. Viewed from both the living and dining rooms, the fireplace provided a soaring centerpiece. She applied *Meridian Hexagon* to the surround, then lowered the wall above the fireplace to create fluidity from one room to the next.

One of Gentile's favorite spaces, the living room, features a blend of Asian pieces with modern simplicity. An antique Shan-xi chest lends a feeling of serenity, as do the chairs that she had covered in *Lampas*, a silk floral fabric from Brunschwig & Fils. "It's such an unusual fabric to put on a contemporary chair," Gentile says. "But I love it because it feels silky and very feminine, like having a kimono wrapped around you."

Meridian Hexagon—pewter, bronze and green glass tiles—turned the fireplace into a dramatic centerpiece. Gentile lowered the wall above to create fluidity between the dining room and living room.







AN OLD ARMOIRE AND ANTIQUE

ceramic garden stool blend well with a contemporary coffee table that Gentile had custom made. She

believes that pairing Asian antiques with modern pieces is easy and allows the design to really take on the personality of the owner.

"Having this mixture is more soulful and sensual to me," Gentile says. "Pairing allows for a more interesting design than one that is purely modern. It gives the interior design a bit of an edge and that 'wow' effect."

A frequent home entertainer, Gentile also wanted a home that would be comfortable for guests—sometimes 20 at a time. "For every client, I design for a full life," she says. "That includes making friends and family comfortable without worry." Her friends enjoy gathering around the new kitchen, which looks drastically different from the old '60s design. "I can't get them into the living room—that is, until we start dancing," she laughs. Gentile replaced the original white cabinets in the kitchen with walnut cabinetry and added an island topped with *Verde Fantastico* granite. "I love the color," Gentile says. "It's a pretty unique slab with an acid-green running through it." She used the same granite for the countertops.

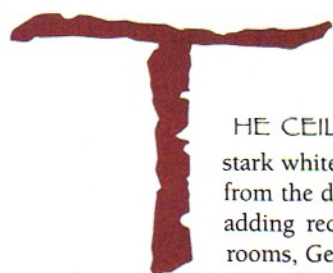
The kitchen opens onto the dining room, an informal space that is flanked on one side by the fireplace. Gentile designed the dining table and had it made with Macassar Ebony, a rare wood from Indonesia. The exotic veneer provides enough contrast to the walnut floor. "By using a wood top with variegated grain on the dining table, I was able to get relief from the walnut floor," Gentile says. She sketched a contemporary design for the dining chairs and had them covered in orange velvet—"Orange and lime green are my favorite colors," she says. The trio of linen-shaded pendant lights provides ample lighting without distracting from the various woods and patterns below.

Top: Gentile's office is located on the first floor of the house, where she kept the design simple. Pendant lights and the clean lines of built-in cabinets are in sync with the home's post-modern feel.

Left: Gentile custom-designed the dining table in Macassar Ebony and the chairs in orange velvet. Three shapely, linen-covered pendant lights soften the room's hard edges.

Opposite: Two contemporary chairs in the living room are covered in Brunschwig & Fils' *Lampas* fabric, which reminds Gentile of a silk kimono and matches perfectly with the antique Shan-xi chest.





THE CEILING, WHICH WAS ONCE A stark white, is now covered in grass cloth from the dining to the living room. Upon adding recessed lighting throughout the rooms, Gentile realized that repairing the original ceiling would entail major construction. Instead, she opted to cover it with wallpaper that would enhance the home's Zen feel—a solution with both functional and aesthetic appeal.

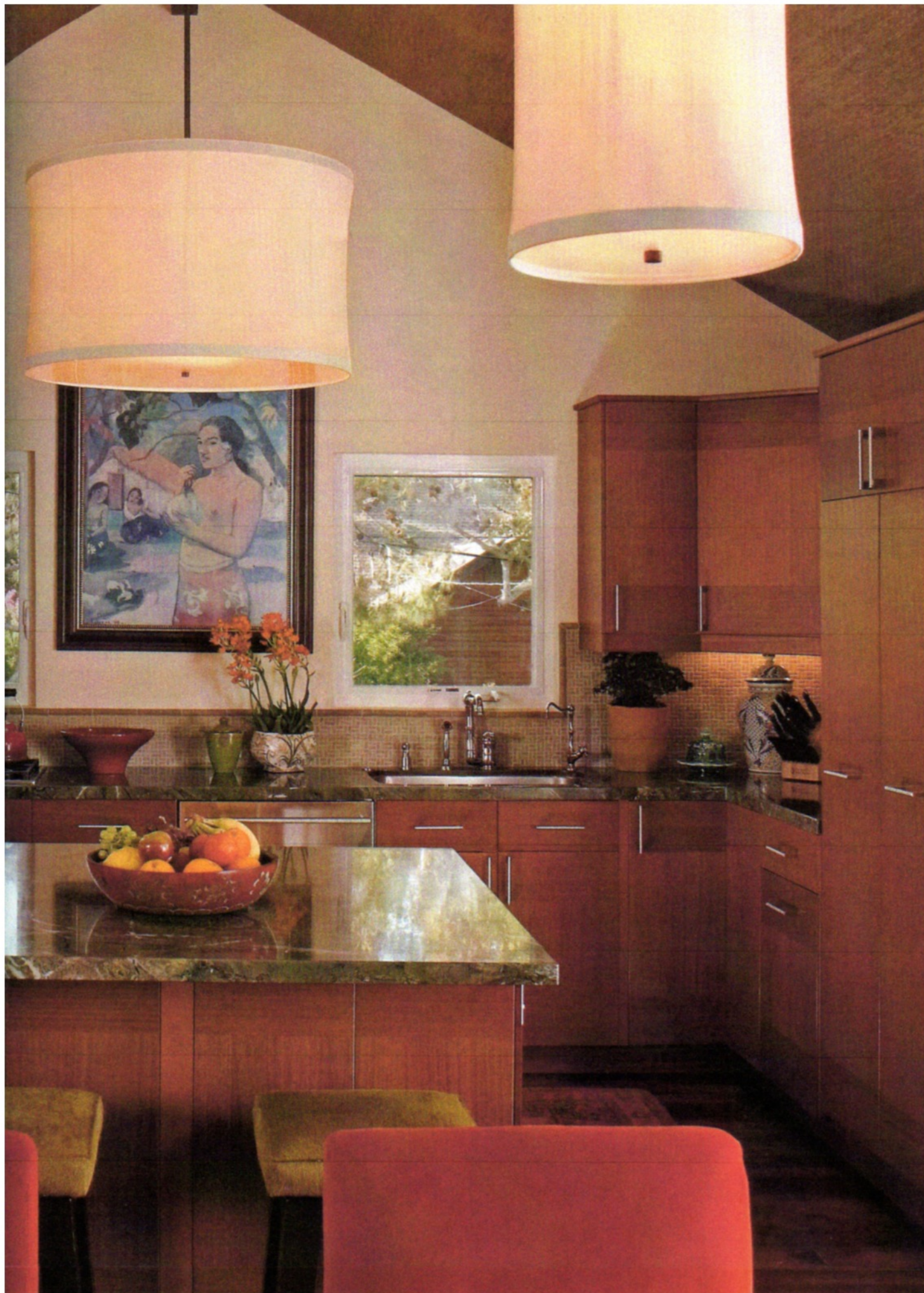
"The panels within the grass cloth are varied and provide irregularity that creates a sense of warmth in the room," Gentile says.

Just outside the living room is an expansive deck with tree-top views of her yard. To create a comfortable outdoor space, Gentile selected chairs and an ottoman from West Elm, and Sunbrella fabric in red with white flowers. She included an old bamboo settee to tie in the Asian theme. An antique hand-painted trunk from China serves as a resting place for cocktails when entertaining as well as for coffee each morning—Gentile's favorite time of day. "I love spending my mornings drinking coffee and reading on the deck," she says.

Gentile's other refuge is the master suite, where she wanted a sensuous but not overly feminine look. She designed a Cavallini cowhide headboard on a platform base, and paired it with two hand-painted nightstands from Peru. Antique window panels found at Genghis Khan, seagrass carpet and a bamboo ceiling fan lend to the feel of a tropical retreat. Wide glass doors open onto a secluded courtyard planted with bamboo, orchids and orange and yellow kangaroo paws around a stone Kuan Yin sculpture.

Friends love spending time in Gentile's remodeled kitchen. She replaced the cabinets, installed new appliances and placed an island topped with *Verde Fantastico* granite. The ceiling here and in the living room is covered in grass cloth wallpaper.





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ENTILE TURNED AGAIN TO Oceanside Glass for surface materials in the master bath. Glass tile in a herringbone pattern surround a custom wood-framed mirror

that is also the medicine cabinet—"I do this for all of my clients," Gentile says, "because an oversized mirror/medicine cabinet makes getting ready so much easier." The clean lines of the Waterworks sconces complement the tile. Gentile chose a hammered pewter sink, a faucet by Rohl, and Kirkstone for the countertop. For the shower, which also functions as a steam room, she combined polished slate with pewter-colored glass tile accents.

Downstairs, where Gentile meets with clients and does her design work, the office and guest suite are clean and fresh. Because the rooms flow freely into each other, she kept the design simple and colors congruent. She had built-ins installed that mimic the clean lines upstairs, and selected a neutral carpet and crisp white bedding. In the guest bath, she used glass tile to create a pale green floor, and *Calcutta Oro* marble on the vanity for understated elegance. As in other rooms throughout the Gentile home, the focal point downstairs is an antique piece from Asia—the fiery red dragons on the armoire beckon another place and time.

"I just love the textures, rustic quality and intricacies of old Asian pieces," Gentile says. "There is always a story behind each piece that brings you to another place." □



Left: Gentile created a spa-like retreat in her bathroom, with herringbone-patterned glass tile, a hand-hammered pewter sink, Kirkstone countertop, and a shower/steam room covered in polished slate.

Opposite: Mornings are Gentile's favorite time of day, which she spends drinking coffee and reading on her deck. She covered her outdoor furniture in Sunbrella fabrics and blended contemporary with a bamboo settee and an antique Chinese chest.