

# Project blends old, new for 'British cozy' look

The design client was a stylish and charming ex-pat who was easy to work with and even easier to befriend. When I first met her and her husband in 2005 they called me for help on a large custom home they had purchased. They had recently relocated here from the Monterey area, and the wife had trepidations about her new digs. I was brought in just after the last of the construction work to create



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continuity between her personal style preferences and that of the new architecture.

She ended up being a dream client. Her taste was conclusive, she

adored all things British, had beautiful antiques, and a collection of Spode, chintz ware and Wedgewood to work with. And we became great friends.

Fast forward seven years. The husband was just retired from his second career as a school teacher, and with retirement came the opportunity for more travel. With two other homes to maintain on both coasts, three residences posed logistical issues. When

a smaller but equally charming home came on the market nearby, the larger home was put up for sale and sold within weeks. The smaller home was purchased and the upgrades began.

As with the previous residence, the client was concerned about the new home's style and how it would relate with her traditional style furnishings.

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But after seeing the furniture placed, the curtains altered and installed, and every last picture and Eng-

lish platter hung she was smitten.

At the wife's bequest, skylights were installed in the bathrooms, living room, kitchen and master bedroom and solar tubes were installed in the hall. They

were an invaluable investment in year-round light and ambience. The tops of the flowering pear trees are visible from both the sofa and master bed, creating the most magical effect in the spring.

Challenges are inevitable when moving into a new home. The art of a designer is playing up a project's best features and turning the flaws into assets. The living room had nice dimensions and a charming, white painted brick corner fireplace with a lovely white painted wood mantel. But a large wall of bookshelves visible from the front door, entry, and formal dining room created an undeniable focal point. Depending on what was put in them, they would either be fabulous or ... not.

What first came to mind was of a large collection of travel, design and garden books, and biographies the clients have been collecting over the years. We started by artfully filling the shelves with them, six or seven here and six or seven there. Then we filled in the blanks with framed photos of family, some great iron urns, several pieces of cream colored ceramics, and pieces of her China collections. The results were charming. It became the focal point and anchor of the living room.

The color scheme started out as "yellow and blue," but as the project progressed, we added touches of red.



Courtesy photos / Shiree Segerstrom

Collections of books, china and family photos add interest to a wall of built-in shelving (above). A white armchair (far left) offers a peaceful place to read. Tone-on-tone blue fabrics (left) adds a subtle pattern to a small dining room.

There is a white and blue slipcovered sofa, a white quilted armchair with contrasting yellow welts, a pair of red plaid armchairs, and some great feather throw pillows in a variety of yellow, blue and red print fabrics. An antique wooden trunk serves as a coffee table and has a tray on top to hold more books and television remotes. An antique armoire holds the television. Wonderful red vintage area rugs, chosen by the client, dot the pale maple floors. We've hung framed tapestries, new prints, and old paintings. And in every room there are pieces of the china.

The window treatments

taken from the previous home fit perfectly after alteration, and we used all but just a few drapery panels. The antiques and custom upholstery and slipcovers create an attractive contrast to the cool, contemporary feel of the architecture.

In the small but open dining room we kept the décor simple with floor-to-ceiling blue tone-on-tone drapery panels and matching blue slipcovered chairs. What I love about tone-on-tone "prints" is that they add subtle pattern to a room.

The table was a cherished family piece that was refinished after an unfortunate bout with water. On the walls above a vintage

sideboard we've displayed a matching mirror, some stunning antique oil paintings and pale blue English platters. The former ceiling fixture didn't relate well to the antiques so a vintage chandelier smartly replaced it.

The overall effect is a stylish combination of antiques, collectible accessories, and the current-day fabric treatments we designed. It's warm and full of character. I think of it as "British cozy." Best of all, it represents the client and her distinctive style.

A home is never really done. It evolves as we do, adapting to our changing needs. Soon there will be a new garden in back. Personally, I'm hoping it will be an English one with big cabbage roses, climbing vines, fountains and, maybe, a small, understated statue or two.

### Shiree's Cheat Sheet

- Don't let yourself get too wrapped up in a certain color scheme. Choose one vibrant color like red or turquoise and add it to your existing colors for an artful look.
- Drapery panels are not just for Grandma's house. They are a classic addition to any interior if done in the right fabric. Choose a two- or three-pleat header or a "goblet" pleat for a fresh take on draperies.

*Shiree Hanson Segerstrom studied and apprenticed in interior design for three years before launching her own firm in 1999. She is the author of the blog [www.joyofnesting.blogspot.com](http://www.joyofnesting.blogspot.com) and has been featured in the San Francisco Chronicle, Wall Street Journal online, Sacramento Bee and the stylish California living magazine, C. Contact her at [www.shireesegerstrom.com](http://www.shireesegerstrom.com)*