

STYLE COMPASS

Windsor
SMITH

Windsor with pets, Camille the duck and doggie Zona



MEET WINDSOR SMITH.

She's Los Angeles' hottest underground designer whose days of flying under the radar are surely coming to an end. Having partnered with Kravet to produce Windsor Smith Carpets in 2007, she has again joined forces with Kravet for her own textile and fabric line scheduled to launch in June, 2008. In addition to these two ventures, her custom furniture line, available on her Windsor Smith Home website, is flourishing. How much longer can she expect to slip through our consciousness? The clock is ticking.

Gallery living – whereby the art informs the interior. Double-sided sofa allows viewing of the art of the garden

The name Windsor Smith is like a new vocabulary word. Once you learn it, you suddenly see it everywhere. She is the favorite on almost every design blog, pops up in the latest shelter books, and is the star of *Domino* magazine's website where a video of the designer giving us a tour of her LA home is so popular, *Domino* continues to run it for months on end.

the present – reviving the conventional purposes of rooms, i.e., the music room, the library, even the formal dining room – and bringing them forward to suit the demands of today's life, but with a fresh, newly layered functionality.

Says Smith, "We live in a world where everything is coming at us at the speed of light. We want to stay connected to



Windsor Smith washed linens for Kravet epitomizes her signature look of "optimistic elegance."

A self-described "lifestyle architect," Smith creates homes for her clients that reflect their personalities, designing for them "bespoke" furniture that is a blend of the past but scaled and functional for the present – a gracious concept that is mindful of our contemporary lifestyles. Her hallmark is weaving the past with

things that are classic and familiar, but we don't want to be left behind on the 'new.' I love the European sensibility where a new generation moves into their ancestral home and injects into it their modern way of life. Timeless design in everyday living – that's the feeling I'm out to capture."



An ethereal salon in variations of blue. Windsor Smith custom silk rug from Kravet

Smith did not come to this level of skill and mindset through a formal design education but rather from her intuitive observations and choices. She has been since childhood, an embodiment of aspiration, drive, and dreams – and dreaming about it all in vibrant hues. A “self-confessed slave to color,” Windsor grew up smack in the middle of Kansas, where she remembers,

“Everything was the color of dirt. There was wheat, corn, rusty tractors – and more dirt. I was always looking skyward – living for the vivid sensations of the green treetops against the endless blue sky. As a child, I desperately craved color. I considered it an utter tragedy that my footie pajamas from the Sears catalogue didn’t come in chartreuse or lavender.”

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Silver is the new white. In the mirror’s reflection is a photograph of Johnny Cash’s childhood home. Says Smith, “I love the contradiction of the barren countryside and the opulence of the satin pillows and white gold frames.”





Mercurial elements create intrigue while throwing light in the foyer

Smith says, "The ceremonial cocktail hour brings down the day's rhythm and brings up the evening." She sets up the bar with ceremony as she calls it, "the time for the ritual of daily communication and enjoying company." Ebonized bar with mirrored shelf and caster feet



The youngest child of merchandising/manufacturing parents, the young Windsor was a roller dance champion before the age of eight, and admits she was "an incorrigible ham when it came to performing." What she did not realize was that she was also a born merchant, that is, until she conquered the top award (for several years running) for selling Girl Scout cookies. Carving out a five-mile territory and wearing tap shoes and a feather boa (She notes that it is very hard to travel much further tapping on the hot Kansas pavement.), she discovered if she could get one tap shoe in the door, she could actually influence people. Expanding her arsenal from Thin Mints and Samoans while mixing her sales pitch with song and dance routines, she successfully pedaled her hand-crocheted toaster covers to unsuspecting cookie buyers.

As an adult, Smith performed in theatre in Texas and taught dance in Manhattan, Los Angeles, and Tokyo, but it was not until she was expecting her first child, son Trinity, that she returned to merchandising. With a friend, she created an award-winning baby clothes line, Baby Duckies, but as a single mother, manufacturer's hours did not allow her to spend the time she needed with her family.



Vintage Baccarat chandelier with shades of smoke silk is the crown jewel of this dining room

With a passion for the decorative arts, Smith dabbled in antiques found at local flea markets, hence the light bulb over the head moment: It dawned upon her, “Why not travel to Europe and fill up a container with my finds and sell them on the (what was then) sleepy La Cienega corridor?” For the next two years, Smith traveled to major European cities and loaded up container after container with impressive pieces, mostly massive ones, as she cheerfully repeated her shopping mantra, “If it doesn’t weigh over a thousand pounds, I won’t buy it.”

Smith brought back to LA architectural elements such as headers, columns, big iron gates – and transformed them. A commanding doorframe became a pier mirror; discarded carved moldings and statuary remnants were included in the mix for their texture and historical references. Her clients loved what Smith created in their homes, as she veered from standard formal interior design with her flair for stunning if not unexpected design concepts – and with priority to purpose and assimilation to her clients' lifestyles.

From Smith’s buying trips in Europe came an evolution in her furniture line. She reflects, “I love pieces with provenance – their craftsmanship and elegance make them irresistible, but so many times, I’d find a fabulous chair with scale and condition that didn’t quite fit in with today’s proportion or function, so I started working on the idea of “bespoke” furniture – creating that one perfect chair or breakfront.”



1920's tea table plated in silver and ebonized by Smith

Walls in shades of pale pink Bermuda sand above a wainscoting in mother of pearl by Donghia. A perfect backdrop to collections of line drawings in gilt frames



In the Windsor Smith Home Collection, Smith cultivated a team of craftsmen who produce each piece domestically. Like the hallowed guilders in eighteenth and nineteenth-century France, Smith's joiners and builders would not be surprised to find her carving out her initials in every nail head as she has also been known to oversee them, making sure that each small pane of leaded glass is installed in the old world way, at slightly different angles to catch the glimpses of refracting light. Since her Home Collection was launched on-line last August, the designer has expanded to upholstery and case goods.

At her new home in Mandeville Canyon, "LA's biggest secret and the most fantastic place to live," whispers Smith, are her two sons,

Trinity, 16, and Oliver, 15, plus pets – doggie Zona, and Zona's own pet, Camille the white duck – and of course, Smith's husband, Anthony, whom she calls "the rock of the family. It's my husband who insists we are all home at 6:30 for dinner, and that we privilege our evenings for the family."

Both Trinity and Oliver are top students and star athletes at their high school – a public school, as Smith prefers public over private institutions, appreciating in them a "naïveté" and their "great vitality and broad-based opportunities." Her sons play championship tennis as members of their school's U.S.T.A team, practice on the family's home court, and travel every summer to Barcelona to attend the famous Sanchez Casals Tennis Academy.

“Everyone ends up in the kitchen.” So Smith designed the most beautiful paneled room that seats up to 14 guests. Customized cabinetry with Cromone locks, white statuary marble, and old mercury glass back splashes. Giant hanging pot and pan rack flanked by two chandeliers.

Windsor has completely eliminated the dining room and has placed her twelve-foot antique refectory table in the heart of the kitchen where all her guests congregate during house parties. “No matter how gorgeous your home, people will always gravitate to the kitchen, so I decided to make it the focal point. I have my guests sit at the great table while the chef prepares each dish, serving them instantaneously from the wall of ovens I had installed. I’ve made the kitchen the most beautiful room in the house with paneling in midnight blue, white statuary marble, mercury glass back splashes, and a giant pot and pan rack suspended high and flanked by two chandeliers. I like to break rules as to how a room *should* function. And if a client isn’t sure about the concept, it’s my job to lead them to the Holy Land!”

In Smith’s vocabulary, the terms

designer-businesswoman and tender mother and wife are not mutually exclusive, as she is Olympian in juggling these two domains. Asked what she did for Mother’s Day last month, Smith replies, “I went on a bike ride to and back from Santa Monica with my sons and my husband – it was my youngest, Oliver’s idea. Do you realize that while it looks flat, the road back from the beach to Mandeville is a complete and total incline? I forced the boys to stop and look at every conceivable view or pretty wildflower on the way home. A mom’s got to be creative in finding ways to catch her breath when she’s biking uphill with these guys who are in tip-top shape!”

Not just remarkably refreshing and talented, she’s pretty inventive in a jam, too.

Look for her name: Windsor Smith. She’s going to be everywhere.



what direction is your style compass pointed to?

FABRICS: Hand-washed linens for slipcovers for formal living rooms to convert to garden rooms in the summer: silk velvet for powder room walls, linen and silk taffeta for draperies.

ENTERTAINING: Intimate dinners around my kitchen table with Lulu Powers or Josh Rosenstein getting their “cook” on!

COLOR: Odd color combinations like putty with verdant green, pale icy blue with tangerine ... any color you can't quite define... any mercurial color.

TRAVEL: Spain, Italy, and Morocco for inspiration... Anguilla or Parrot Cay for soulful bonding.

GARDENING or FLORAL: Tomato vines spiraling around cones made of twigs, exterior gardens that creep indoors, trelliage and chateau boxes in morning rooms and along garden walls, large bunches of garden roses and viburnum in porcelain buckets.



Windsor Smith fabrics in nuances of hard to define colors. Subtlety in colors and textures are key approaches in her textiles



ART or DESIGN: Nude studies and line drawings of obscure and unknown artists.

MUSEUM: The Louvre

RESTAURANT: La Chevre d'or in Eze Village on the French Riviera

HOTEL: Cap DeLuca on the island of Anguilla; the Hotel Du Cap at Eden Rock in the Cap d'Antibes



MUSIC CD: Stevie Wonder, Alessandro Safini, Billie Holliday, The Neville Brothers

GIFT: Soft handmade leather loafers in sherbet colors from Capri

SHOP: Inner Gardens, Jean De Merry, Indigo Seas

BOOK: *Bird by Bird* by Annie Lamott



La Chevre d'or in Eze Village

PAIR GILT-TOLE, CRYSTAL, & BLUE-PAINTED GIRANDOLES. Available from William Word Fine Antiques



THREE PAINTED METAL FISH FROM A TONY DUQUETTE INTERIOR. Available from FAT CHANCE



ITALIAN CARVED CARRARA MARBLE HALL BENCH. Available from Guinevere

Windsor Smith's 6 Quick Picks from *Istdibs*



"COUTURE IN PARIS COURTYARD #1" BY MARK SHAW. Available from Svenska Möbler



HI-END ITALIAN GOATSKIN BAR CABINET. Sold from Visiona



MONUMENTAL 11 FOOT HARVEY PROBBER SOFA IN ORIGINAL FABRIC. Available from Home114