

# WESTERN Interiors

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# Windsor's Way

Los Angeles designer WINDSOR SMITH is reinventing traditional interiors with graphic patterns, alluring colors and a glamorous new spirit

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text by CAREN KURLANDER



Designer Windsor Smith mixes gilt accents with "toxic pink" walls in her Brentwood, California, dining room.





The chain-link pattern of a vintage Dior dress echoes that of Smith's new fabrics.



## Creating a Classic Look

- 1 "It's important for every room to have a piece with provenance," says Smith. "Even a breakfast room needs an item with history."
- 2 "I don't think furniture should look like it landed here from another planet," says the designer. "There are classic shapes that should live in our rooms."
- 3 "When you do take chances, do it with paint or wallpaper or a rug," she says. "Those are wonderful ways to give a nod to what's new."



**left** Smith covered her living room furniture with fabric from her Kravet line. **above** The Entry Round Settee from the Windsor Smith Home collection.

I am definitely a traditionalist," says Los Angeles designer Windsor Smith. "But I like classic themes realized in a new way. I don't want to get left behind on this wonderful new infusion of contemporary elements." Judging by the provocative use of color in her Brentwood, California, house, the sophisticated pieces in her Windsor Smith Home furniture collection, and the graphic patterns in her new rug and fabric lines for Kravet, Smith is not only keeping up, she's setting the pace.

### How did you get started?

I was an antiques dealer. I always said that the criteria for me to buy something was that it had to weigh a thousand pounds!

### How would you describe your style?

I like the idea of a new vernacular pitched

against classic sensibilities. Everything should feel like it's of the present but also has some kind of thread to history.

### How do you marry traditional and contemporary styles?

That's how I started developing my rug line with Kravet. I was doing traditional rooms, and I felt that the type of rugs that were available was limited. I started making custom rugs using Chinese silk and very simple, quiet contemporary patterns. And putting that kind of contemporary spin underneath a gorgeous traditional room was exciting to me.

### What about color?

I'm really drawn to off-palette colors like Weimaraner or Bermuda Sand, which is not really white and not really pink. In my own kitchen I did a deep navy, almost



Smith's Colony Breakfront cabinet is available in custom colors with antiqued brass or polished nickel hardware.





“I’m dealing with lifestyle as much as aesthetics,” says Smith. “My work is really about getting people to fit their big lives into a gorgeous environment.”

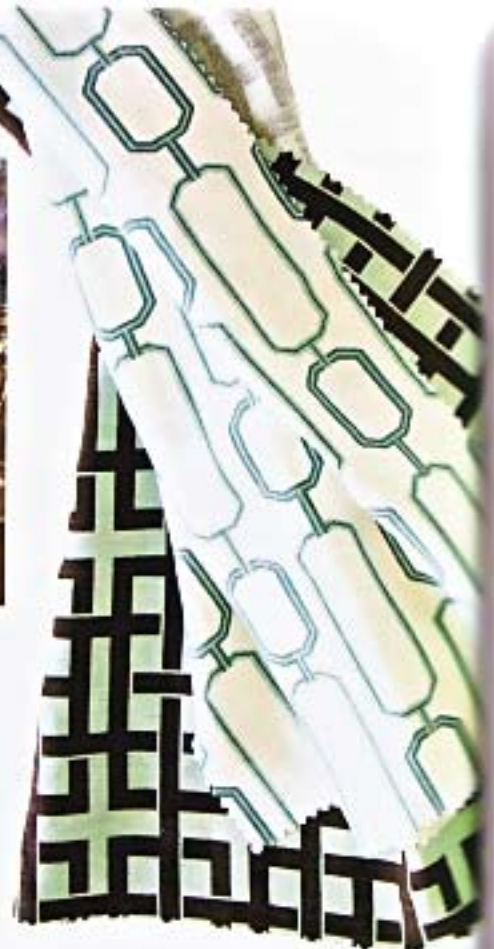
black, and I kept leaning over the painters, saying, “Another drop of black, another drop of black, another drop of black.” We eventually got a color that you can’t quite define, but you know that if no one was looking, you’d lick the walls.

**How do you use color in an interior?**

Because I do a lot of traditional houses, I tend to keep the trim work white or monochromatic. I do jump off and use more color on the walls and sometimes in the textiles, though. In my own dining room I did kind of a brilliant toxic pink on the walls. Now I’m interested in using black and deep navy and charcoal as base colors, but you have to balance that with large doses of white.

**What inspired your Windsor Smith Home furniture collection?**

I love American culture, and I love traditional homes. I’ve found that when you’re doing a very American-style home, the appropriate choice is Chippendale or Georgian-style furniture. But it’s so tiny!



It’s like doll furniture. The lines are so clean, though, that certain pieces can easily swing over to this newer contemporary look. So I felt like there was a demand for classic, American-influenced furniture done in a very new way.

**Why did you decide to create a fabric line with Kravet?**

There are a tremendous number of beautiful prints on the market for about \$150 a yard, but there’s nothing for \$40 to \$50 a yard. And so rather than a great fabric being relegated to a pillow, I wanted people to be able to use it for drapery or to cover their whole sofa. My collection ranges from off-palette taffetas to washed-linen prints that are very geometric.

**Why did you choose geometrics?**

I’ve always loved pattern but have difficulty living with it, so I set out to create designs that I wouldn’t tire of.

**How do you balance function with aesthetics?**

You have to be mindful about how spaces

**clockwise from left** The Chloe sofa from Smith’s furniture line. Indian saris make easy outdoor tablecloths. A Chinese-Chippendale pattern from Smith’s Kravet rug line. The designer’s own vintage jewelry. Personal collections dress the dining table. Menara and Continuum (top) washed linens for Kravet.



really work. I've converted a lot of dining rooms into morning rooms that have game tables and comfortable seating that inspire families to spend time together. Efficient study areas are great, and kitchens should be gorgeous and large because that's where everybody ends up. That's why I call myself a lifestyle architect. I feel like I have a responsibility to give people homes that support their families more than just to create beautiful spaces.

**What drove the design of your living room?**

I thought that if I used the same fabric on most of the furniture, it would become a quiet backdrop for our life. I took a design that I did for Kravet called Rial, a Moorish window pattern in soft green, and I did every single piece of furniture with it. It takes a large room and suddenly makes it incredibly approachable. You want to curl up on every chair!

**What are the important elements of designing a dining room?**

It must be both beautiful and comfortable. I use colors that inspire the appetite for food and conversation. I chose pink in my dining room because it set off the gilt in both the chairs and the picture frames in a beautiful way. Antique navy chairs keep the room from appearing too quirky.

**Does fashion influence your interiors?**

There's no question. As you experience different textiles in fashion, there's no way you can't carry them over into interiors.

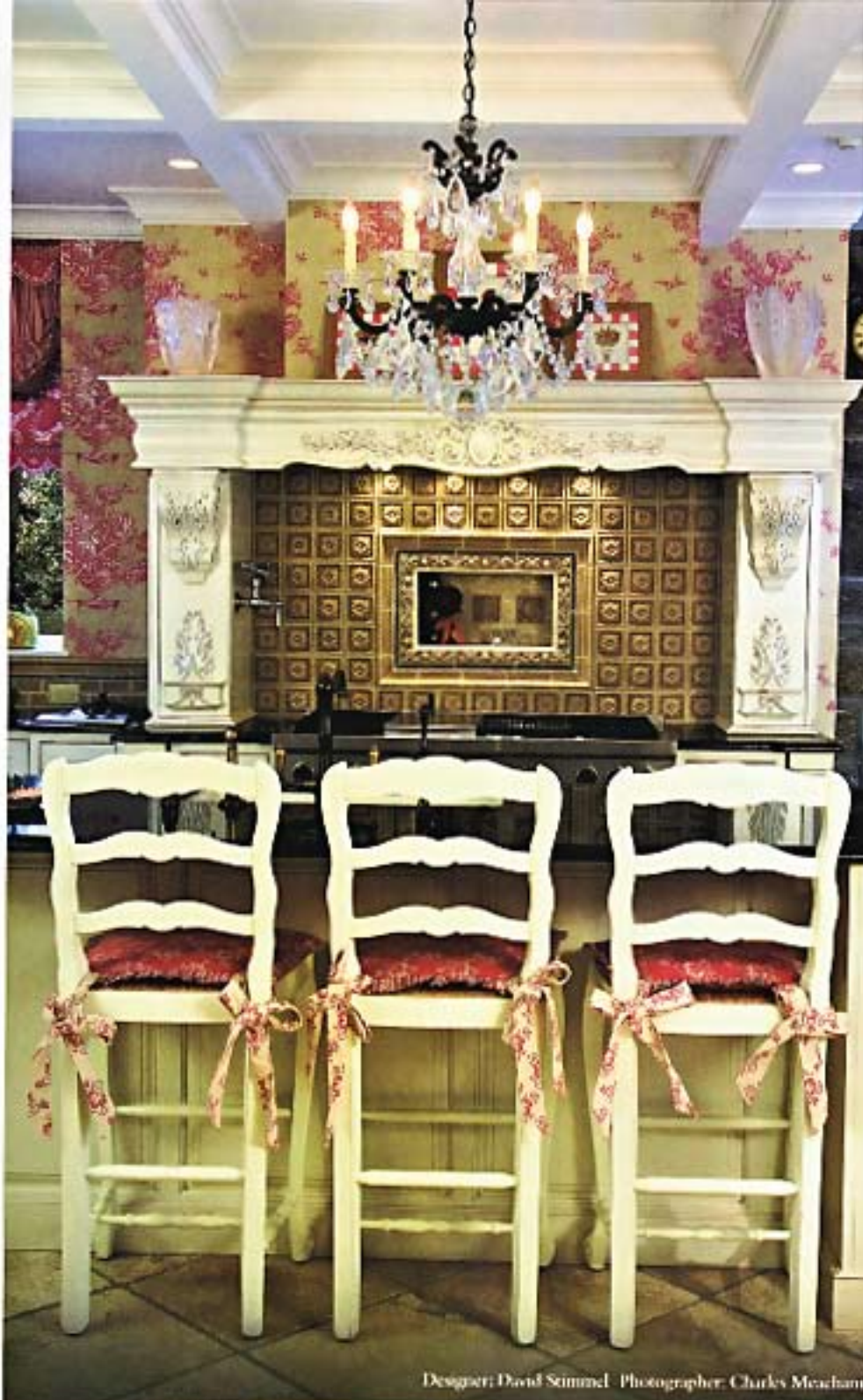
**Are there any designers who have inspired your work?**

I'm most influenced by people like Elsie de Wolfe and the iconic designers from the 1920s to the 1940s. They took the Victorian heaviness and opulence and kind of lightened it all up. And I love the nostalgia of old Hollywood.

**Does living in Los Angeles affect your design style?**

The glamorous aspect is a contagious element of design in Los Angeles. It's something that's in the woodwork. ✦

The Windsor Smith Home furniture collection and Windsor Smith for Kravet fabric line are available at [windsor-smith-home.com](http://windsor-smith-home.com).



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