

52 Leading Voices in American Interiors*

ELEMENTS *of* LIVING

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*Reveal Their
Furnishing Sources
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Paul Wiseman, Jay Jeffers

Paul Wiseman

THROUGH HIS much-lauded design firm, the Wiseman Group, has been a stalwart of the San Francisco design scene since 1960, Paul Wiseman has been toiling away at design a good deal longer. "My mother knew something was up when all I would do was draw plans for houses when I was a kid," says Wiseman, who grew up in the Sacramento River delta, fascinated by the work his folks were always doing on their old Victorian house.

Today, says Wiseman, "my underlying philosophy is appropriateness: Is it appropriate to landscape, to lifestyle, to budget? When all factors fall into place, you have a beautiful design." Accordingly, his interiors run the gamut, from a breathtakingly modern design for a house

by renowned Mexican architect Ricardo Legorreta (Wiseman designed virtually all the furniture and light fixtures), to whimsical eclecticism for a Balinese-style house whose owner told him, "Honey, when you go shopping for my fabric, put on headphones and play only salsa music. If you show me anything beige, it's your kneecaps." Wiseman loves it all, explaining, "Decorating is one of those remarkable professions that involve everything in an interesting balance. You're the servant one minute, the date the next, the dealer, the street sweeper, all in one day!" —*EM*

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Jay Jeffers

ADALLAS NATIVE with a BA in international business and marketing, Jay Jeffers graduated from college knowing a thing or two about business. But rather than stay behind a desk crunching numbers, he decided to rearrange the furniture. While on a career track at the Gap in San Francisco, he says, "I knew I wanted to do something different, so I went back to school and worked part-time for another designer [Richard Witzell & Associates]. Luckily my boss from the Gap hired me to redo a house in Mill Valley from start to finish."

Jeffers opened his own practice in 1993, but the first inkling that he wanted to be an interior designer came to him in a rental in San Francisco when he was in his 20s. "It was a dream apartment with moldings, hardwood floors, and a great view," he says. "I experimented with color and I painted it myself. It was then that I realized I had a talent for this." Today, Jeffers is known for his bold interiors with fresh colors. "I don't decorate with a lot of white," he admits. "It just doesn't fit in very well in San Francisco. But in L.A. I'm doing a house that's practically all white." —*KWG*

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Fern Santini

AFRAYD SHE couldn't make a living doing what she really wanted, Fern Santini graduated from college with an accounting degree. At her first job, she stayed late one night to paint her office a "beautiful taupe," anticipating collective admiration the next day. "Fern," said her boss that morning, "we are not the kind of firm where people paint their offices without permission." Santini was gruffly shown the door.

Her true love was waiting on the other side. While working as a buyer for a dress shop in her hometown of Austin, Santini started designing friends' interiors on the side. "They'd ask, 'Can we hire you for the weekend?'" Then it grew and snowballed, "says Santini. "By the time I had my own firm [Abode], I had a clientele base I didn't have to sell my sense of taste and style to."

Giddy for Grosgrain

BY JAY JEFFERS

MY MANTRA IS "sophisticated fun"—I love using materials in stylish, unexpected ways. One of my favorite techniques is adding polish to a room with grosgrain ribbon. It's an easy, elegant way to give visual interest to a space. The real fun begins when it's time to choose the grosgrain. Not only does it come in endless colors and patterns (it can even be custom-printed), but it's also inexpensive.

In my living room in San Francisco, I ran a one-inch-wide length of chocolate ribbon just beneath the ceiling molding. It gives the room a crisp, tailored look without making it stuffy. In the bedroom, the ribbon makes a bolder statement. I wove together hot pink and tangerine lengths into a trellis pattern on one of the chocolate walls, then repeated the palette in the linens and accessories. A little grosgrain goes a long way toward expressing personal style, and a lot of it goes...well, the more there is, the more wonderful!

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