



In the living room, a Lawson-Fenning sectional and custom tables from Katie Monkhouse's shop, Westpark Home, top a checkered rug from Heir Looms. Artwork by Charlene Tan, from Sarah Shepard Gallery, surmounts Ann Sacks tiles, while the green brick tiles are from Clé.

The Bold Type

Color may overwhelm some homeowners—but thankfully for Katie Monkhouse, not these clients

by ANH-MINH LE photography by STEPHANIE RUSSO



A bar in the family room, tucked into a cedar-lined niche, features Fusion quartzite, a brass sink from Rejuvenation and Farrow & Ball's Card Room Green paint.



In the dining room—painted in Benjamin Moore’s Delray Gray—a teak table by Ethnicraft is combined with chairs from DWR and a Blueprint Lighting chandelier.



The kitchen’s white oak cabinetry, by Segale Bros., is stained a custom indigo and paired with Ijen Blue quartzite countertops.

For two years, interior designer Katie Monkhouse carried around a swatch of plum-colored linen—hoping for clients who might consider it for their sofa fabric. In 2021, it finally happened: A young couple, a referral from another client, had just purchased a 1955 bilevel residence in Corte Madera. The husband’s favorite color is purple. “The house that they were coming from was essentially white and gray—very neutral,” recalls Monkhouse, whose namesake firm is also in Marin County. “They said, ‘We just want something different.’ And they have big personalities.”

Now a purple front door greets visitors to the 4,000-square-foot dwelling, and a Lawson-Fenning sectional upholstered in that plum linen is nearby, in the living room. The 15-month-renovation, completed in conjunction with CMAC Construction, also

entailed removing some walls, including a massive quarry-rock wall, for better flow and functionality.

One thing that Monkhouse was thrilled to keep: the living room’s distinct wood ceiling, with its gently curved pitch. “As soon as they told me that they were fine keeping it—they didn’t want to paint it or change it—I was like, ‘Okay, we’re going to lean into that. This dark wood ceiling is setting the tone for the whole house,’” she says.

Monkhouse extended the redwood tongue-and-groove ceiling into the adjacent space, where the dining area opens into the kitchen. She chose a warm honey stain for the floor to “bridge the ceiling without going too light.” Between the living and dining rooms, she introduced an exquisite focal point: a two-sided fireplace, flanked by doorways. Replacing the existing off-center “chunky and weird fireplace ... was a structural nightmare,” she acknowledges. “But the clients were committed to this design feature. It kind of makes the house.”



A hallway that leads to a powder room, with a Concretti sink and a Phillip Jeffries wallcovering, contains the relocated laundry room.



In the primary bathroom—illuminated by Blueprint Lighting sconces—the oak vanity is topped with Fusion quartzite.



A NativeStone bathtub from Jack London Kitchen & Bath is placed in front of a wall partially lined in a white tile with speckles from Clé.

And perhaps the challenges presented make the outcome all the more rewarding. On both sides of the fireplace, linen-hued tiles from Ann Sacks line the upper portion of the surround. A dark green brick tile from Clé was initially meant to cover the lower part. However, as the fireplace design evolved—becoming increasingly substantial for structural reasons—the quantity of green tiles that was ordered far in advance was no longer sufficient for two sides, and there was a 22-week lead time to purchase more. Hence, the green appears only in the living room and Monkhouse ultimately selected a charcoal brick tile, also from Clé, for the dining room. “In the end, the tile we were able to get worked better with the gray-blue wall color we chose for the kitchen,” she observes.

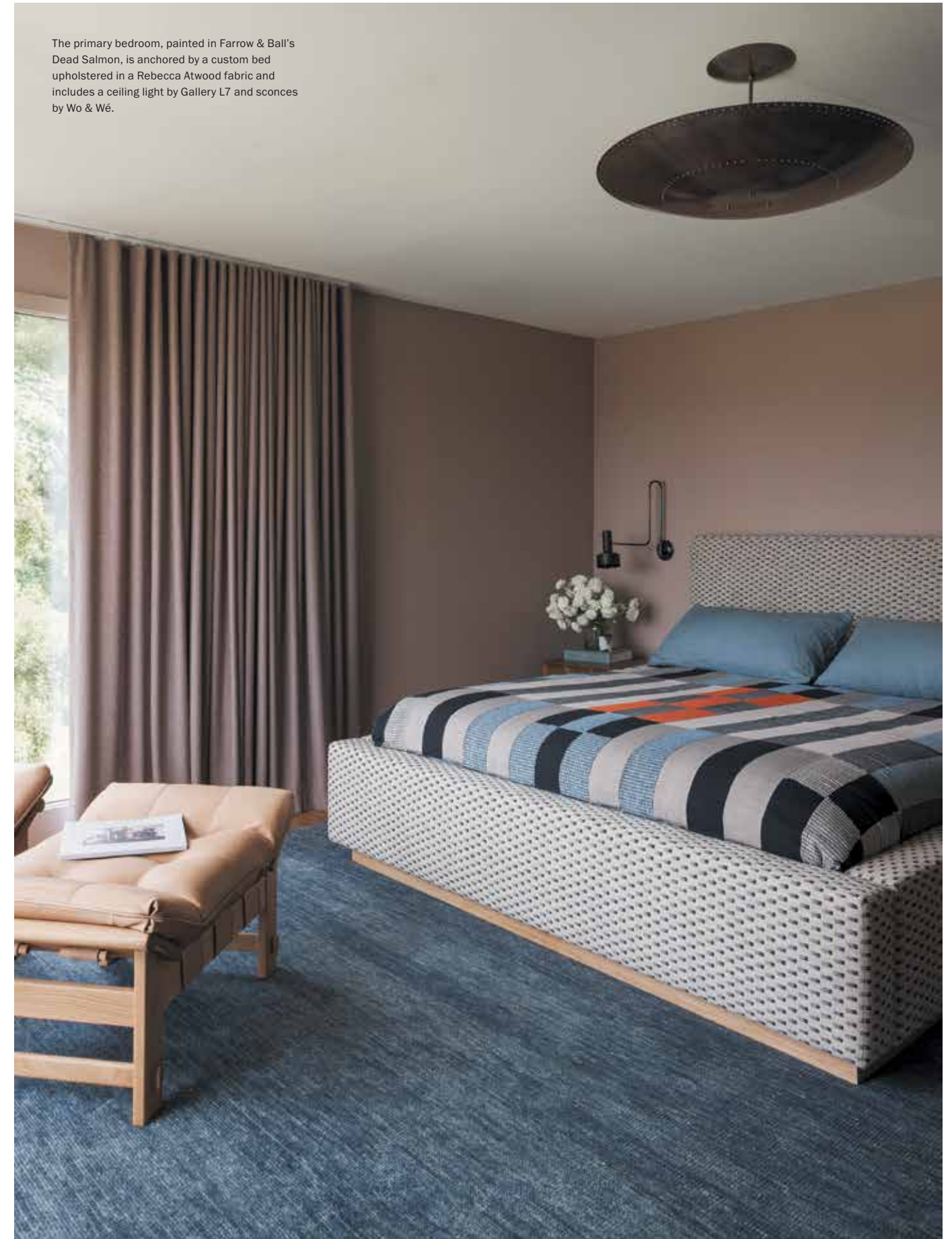
Indeed, the charcoal complements the blue tones in the kitchen—another strong choice by the clients. “They went for it on the stone,” enthuses Monkhouse, referring to the Ijen Blue quartzite that tops the cabinetry and island; its rust veining pulls the warmth from the wood ceiling. The custom cabinetry throughout the house was built by Segale Bros. In the kitchen, white oak with an indigo stain shows the grain, while kerf cuts add texture. “It’s a pretty detailed process to create that cabinetry profile,” she says of the lines on the surface of the wood.

That detail is echoed elsewhere in the home—on a door in the primary bathroom, for example. According to Monkhouse, repeating

an element, material or maker allows for cohesion. Thus, Fusion quartzite is used in the bathroom, as well as the downstairs family room’s fireplace and bar. In various places—like the bathroom sconces and dining room chandelier—Monkhouse sourced from Blueprint Lighting, whose mid-century-inspired pieces are particularly appropriate for the era of the house.

In the primary bedroom, she balanced a bit of boldness—a variegated blue rug and a blanket with a geometric motif—with a quieter backdrop consisting of Farrow & Ball’s Dead Salmon paint along with fine wool drapes in a similar shade. The bed is upholstered in a Rebecca Atwood woven outdoor fabric that imbues pattern and texture—plus, it’s “very cleanable,” says Monkhouse, adding that “there’s a small oak platform, so you get that wood reveal on the bottom.” Wood appears again on the corner chair and ottoman from Lawson-Fenning, which have leather tufted cushions and straps.

The clients moved in earlier this year, about a week before they welcomed their second child. “It was a sprint to get it all done,” says Monkhouse. “We went full service on this one to make sure that, from day one, they were settled and comfortable.” Further reflecting on the project, she notes that the clients “were incredibly trusting. They were like, ‘We’re going to live here forever. Whatever you think this house needs—go for it!’ And it was really fun.”



The primary bedroom, painted in Farrow & Ball’s Dead Salmon, is anchored by a custom bed upholstered in a Rebecca Atwood fabric and includes a ceiling light by Gallery L7 and sconces by Wo & Wé.