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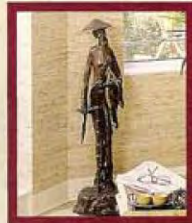


Photo: Shalio courtesy Robb & Sherry

**M**any Southwest Florida interiors are shedding the neutral color schemes of the Mediterranean for the richer spice tones and varied textures of more exotic locales. Rich reds, brilliant tropical hues, grasscloth and raffia, handcarved furniture, bamboo and rattan are replacing subtler beiges and creams and the classical look of the Old World. Right now, interiors inspired by the Orient and the East and West Indies are the height of fashion.

EXOTIC INTERIORS REFLECT ASIAN AND INDIES INFLUENCES

The new look in home décor is both familiar and mysterious. While Asia and the East Indies impart a certain mystique, the tropical lifestyle of the West Indies reflects that of Southwest Florida.

This fusion of cultures is resulting in custom interiors that blend the best of both worlds. Sharing similar characteristics like the use of spice-toned furnishings, bamboo and rattan, Asian-inspired pieces are easily introduced into an East or West Indies design and vice versa. The themes work as effectively throughout an entire home as they do in subtler doses, through the use of fabric, color, texture and accent pieces.

Traces of the East have long been noticeable in Southwest Florida homes. What was once limited to Oriental rugs, vases or chinoiserie furniture has given way to an allure for everything Asian. Making this surge in popularity possible is an increasingly global market that has opened doors to more exotic looks in home décor. Southwest Florida residents can just as easily hop onto their home computers and explore different worlds as they can fly to distant destinations.

PREVIOUS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The Asian ambiance of the breakfast nook in the Salerno model includes grasscloth-covered walls, Oriental vases, a paddle wicker fan and bamboo screen; The shapes and metallics of the East blend with the darker furnishings and wicker of the West; The color of spice, the curtain and pillow fabrics impart an Asian feel, as do the pagoda-style lamp and intricately carved teak artwork above the bed, which is embedded with ruby stones; A wicker paddle fan, coffee table, blinds and lamp are inspired by the Indies.

BY Nanci Theoret

## ORIENTAL APLOMB

Looking for a fresh approach, Robb & Stucky's Kelli Smith, ASID, NCIDQ, opted for Asian in her design of the Salerno model at Bay Colony. "With all the Asian-influenced silk fabrics, accessories from the Orient and handcrafted furniture being introduced into today's market, I felt that it would be a nice change," she says.

The décor suggests "high Asian" with its use of shapes, fabric and color. Smith literally started from the bottom, using naturally finished wooden floors throughout the living, dining and kitchen areas and playing on a palette of soft golds and strong burnt reds with accents in black. In the living room, a pagoda-style cornice is draped in an Asian-inspired print silk fabric accompanied by cording and tas-

is actually fauxed. Silk pillows in rich red and black rest against the headboard. A lamp on a black painted chest mimics the geometric lines in the headboard and a rattan chair has an antiqued Oriental feel. In the second master bedroom, the bedding ensemble is pure Chinatown with a classic Oriental motif on a black background. In a third bedroom, an intricately carved teak accessory, imported from the Orient, is positioned above the headboard and inlaid with ruby red stones.

Asian design tends to follow three basic themes. A traditional Oriental style is accomplished through the use of chinoiserie accent pieces of furniture, characterized by the use of elaborate decoration and intricate patterns. An East Orient design also is distinctive, using clean lines and minimalist sensibility,



Top: Salerno (courtesy Holland Salley Interiors Design)

LEFT: West Indies-inspired furnishings create a distinctive island atmosphere. RIGHT: Spice-colored pillows and accessories, faux-painted walls that resemble grasscloth and an antiqued Oriental rattan chair give an Asian accent to a bedroom in Salerno.

sels. Furnishings — many of which were imported from the Orient — are accented with stylized hardware, intricate carvings and finely grained inlays. Finishes are reminiscent of richly colored spices.

The breakfast nook is the epitome of Asian with a nod toward modern and relaxed. Smith's concept of giving the room an inviting atmosphere for watching television or eating breakfast is executed with Asian-inspired accessories, a sisal area rug, grasscloth on the walls, a bamboo screen and paddle wicker fan. "My goal was to accomplish a contemporary casual feel by using a variety of warm color palettes, textures and finishes," she says.

## ASIAN NIGHTS

With imported pagoda-designed lamps, silk shades and fabrics that bear classic Oriental motifs, the bedrooms in the Salerno model also spark thoughts of Asian nights. In the master bedroom, a geometric headboard is finished in spiced mocha and plays off a wall that appears to be grasscloth but

while a casual yet sophisticated look is often associated with the West Orient.

Although Smith did not purposely incorporate feng shui into her design, there are many elements throughout the Salerno model that suggest it through the use of space and lighting.

## THE WEST INDIES: DESIGNING FOR CLIMATE

Jinx McDonald, allied member ASID and associate member IDS, was delighted when the natural woods and textures and rich colors of her homeland began to make inroads in Southwest Florida about two years ago. A native of Jamaica, it was a style that made sense here. "People are realizing this is the practical way to design for this climate," she says. "It's appropriate because here in Southwest Florida, we're almost in the Caribbean. The climate is exact. People thought it might inch its way out of style, but it has really taken off."

A West Indies décor caters to coolness, relying on lightweight fabrics, breeze-friendly plantation

shutters and ceiling fans. The essence of a tropical lifestyle, it borrows heavily from nature, using textured materials like rattan, bamboo and wicker and pure color that imitates the leaves and blooms of hibiscus and bougainvillea.

McDonald's West Indies design of the Aruba model in Cove Towers for Forum Design Group earned two Sand Dollar Awards in 1999. "I was allowed to do what I had been dying to do, and see how it would go over," she recalls. "It went over very well."

## A SIMPLE STYLE WITH SOUL

The West Indies look lacks pretentiousness, says McDonald, who now owns Jinx McDonald Designs Inc. "There's nothing ostentatious. It uses very sim-

including one of McDonald's favorites — a hand-carved banana leaf.

Perhaps the most recognizable element of West Indies style, one that truly says this is the look of the islands, is a large four-poster plantation bed in the master bedroom. A necessity in the tropics, a mosquito net is replaced with light gauzy fabrics that billow to the floor.

## BRITISH FORMALITY

The West Indies look also may incorporate a more formal influence when British colonial elements are introduced. Large metal-and-crystal chandeliers imported from France, heavier draperies and more formal dining room tables set with china, crystal and silver were common in the



(courtesy East Indies Trading Company)



Top: Salerno (courtesy Holland Salley Interiors Design)

ple, clean lines."

Walls sparkle in bright tones of persimmon, mustard and green. Texturing — whether by faux painting, grasscloth, raffia or a more rustic trowel technique used in the islands — is practically a requirement. "Walls have to have texture," says McDonald. "It gives them soul."

Color on the walls is accented with crisp white architectural details. Shutters, wainscoting, ceilings and crown molding — another West Indies trademark in every room — are painted white. Furniture, whether it be rattan, bamboo or wood, is usually dark, complementing the whites and the brights of the walls and architectural elements.

Floors also exude coolness, using natural stone or wood instead of carpeting. When area rugs are used, they tend to be all-natural seagrass or sisal. Ceiling fans are essential in achieving the breezy West Indies atmosphere. Preserved palm leaves provide a natural look for fan blades, while wooden blades now come in a variety of shapes,

stately British-inspired homes of McDonald's childhood. "There is nothing more elegant or beautiful as old British plantation," she says. "You can make West Indies décor look informal or beachy and as formal as old British plantation style."

Furniture from both the East and West Indies tends to be handcarved. Pineapples, elephants, birds and palm leaves are recurring themes not only in furniture but as accent pieces.

Edgar West, owner of East Indies Trading Company in Naples, travels to exotic destinations to find one-of-a-kind teak furniture produced by local craftsmen in small villages. The handcarved, hand-caned pieces are inspired by antiques from the late-1600s colonial era. "It's perfect for Florida," West says. "The curves and styles are so popular."

## THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Holland Salley Inc. Interior Design's Leslie Christian, ASID, NCIDQ, successfully blended the West and East Indies with hints of contemporary

LEFT: The essence of Asian influence, the bedding bears a classic Oriental motif. Even a picture frame on the night table — a metal base accompanied by a rattan tray table top — has a distinct Asian shape. RIGHT: A carved end table and more subtle items that imbue a West and East Indies feel mix with an understated contemporary Asian influence.

(courtesy East Indies Trading Company)



courtesy East Indies Trading Company



courtesy East Indies Trading Company



courtesy East Indies Trading Company

THIS PAGE: Asian accessories intermingle with furnishings and decorative accent pieces inspired by the Indies.

Asian for a condominium in Pelican Bay. Her clients, a couple from Illinois, did not want traditional Florida décor. "They wanted a lot of dark, rich colors," she says. They did not want too urban of a look, instead seeking to evoke an island feel without losing the drama of a more contemporary setting. "That combination led right into what it evolved into."

Christian mixed the darker, intricately carved woods and the rich earth tones of British colonial with the metallics, grays, white and blacks of a more metropolitan Asian flavor. Floors use larger grids for a natural stone look, incorporating a lot of tile inlay. Textured carpeting creates the illusion of natu-

ral fibers like seagrass and sisal.

Christian abandoned faux finishing for a different look on the walls. She used a heavily textured wallcovering to produce a "nugget look" of copper and gray tones. "It adds dimension."

The artifacts, carvings and accessories she used throughout the model suggest both West and East Indies.

"Everything has a lot of color quality to it," Christian says of the design. "There's a lot of texture in the unit. I think people are really bored with beige on beige. They want that island feeling of being in the tropics without getting into the beach/seaside look." **H&C**