

For Alison Davin, interior design was a natural progression from a career in fine art. After honing her skills working at the Getty Center and Bonhams, she guided private clients in placing artwork and commissioning artists to complete pieces for their homes. “On art installs,” Davin recalls, “I was frequently asked, ‘What color should I paint this wall? What console should go under this piece? What should my sofa look like?’”

Upon moving from Los Angeles to San Francisco, Davin continued in the antiques field. But she eventually branched out into design, launching her own practice in 2007. She soon took a brief hiatus and gave birth to her son. When she returned to design work in 2009, she established her current firm, Jute (www.jutehome.com).

Davin is now working on a renovation in San Anselmo - a small Mediterranean bungalow that will feature reclaimed ceiling beams and handmade Moorish kitchen tiles.

“The client was in the Peace Corps in Africa, traveled a lot growing up and is really great to work with stylistically,” she says. Davin is also designing a chemotherapy treatment room for a doctor’s office, and has been involved with the Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS benefit the past two years. “I love doing charity design events because of the creative freedom you have and the greater cause.”

While she doesn’t have a signature look - “I think my job is to give a client the best version of their personal style,” she says - Davin does incorporate commissioned art into most of her projects. “I really believe it elevates a space more than anything else you can do. And I love working with emerging artists on the whole creative process.”

The Davin cheat sheet

Paint preference: “Porter’s Paints is like the Farrow & Ball of Australia. Porter’s offers great paints and papers that are not as mainstream in the States.” (www.porterspains.com)

Travel tip: “I love to travel and stay in boutique hotels. Great Small Hotels is the best website for hotel recommendations worldwide. It’s based in Barcelona, and I have stayed in their suggested properties on four continents.” (www.greatsmallhotels.com)

Dream destination: “I am Basque, and on my last trip to the region we took a detour and went wine tasting in Rioja. Marqués de Riscal is an amazing winery that is a must-see for all architecture buffs. It marries Frank Gehry’s signature style with the architecture of the adjacent medieval town. The result is breathtaking.” (www.marquesderiscal.com)

Petal pusher: “Floreal on Taylor Street is a fantastic florist with a really great shop offering treasures from the owner’s travels around the world. It’s off the beaten path, but a must while downtown.” (533 Taylor St., San Francisco. (415) 885-4261)

Antique boutique: “Robert Young Antiques in London is one of my favorite dealers. He participates in the San Francisco Fall Antiques Show every October. He always has a great collection of quirky and whimsical pieces. His naive portrait paintings are a favorite.” (www.robertyoungantiques.com)

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