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Creative License: Interior Designer Kress Jack's Mill Valley Home is Awash in Color and Character

By Lotus Abrams, Photography by R. Brad Knipstein 6/26/2025

After renting in Mill Valley and San Rafael for more than 15 years and designing homes for countless clients, interior designer Kress Jack finally got the chance to remodel her own home when a fixer-upper in Mill Valley hit the market two years ago. "It was definitely a funky house, especially on the outside, but I was excited," she recalls. "I actually used to live next door to this house when I was raising my kids, so I already knew everybody on the block."

Born to a family of creatives, Jack got her start in interior design by chance in 2007 while working at a furniture shop, where a client asked for design advice. After that, her business grew organically through word of mouth, and she became known for her eclectic aesthetic – a bespoke mix of retro and modern styles. "My thing has always been color and collecting a lot of old, found things and interesting statement pieces that bring character and a story into people's homes," Jack says.



New garage doors, windows, stucco, landscaping and a new front door were among the improvements made to the exterior of the 1925-built home.

Before Jack could put her signature design stamp on her own home, however, she had extensive repair work to tackle. The exterior of the 1925-built home's stucco was cracked, resulting in water damage and mold; the house had to be reframed; and the windows all needed to be replaced, including the rotted trim. The garage door was missing. There was no railing going up the exterior stairs, and the front yard was a tangle of overgrown ivy. The Spanish-Mediterranean-style interiors held promise, but the details were all off, from the cherry red veneer flooring to the bland bathroom design, not to mention the moldy sheetrock and uneven floors on the three-story home's lower level.

With the help of Buildrite Bay Area, Jack's go-to construction crew, the project got underway. "Every day these 10 guys showed up and there was singing, and I was baking cookies for them," Jack says. "It was magical. The whole thing went pretty well, especially considering I had to do way more work than I planned."



In the dining area, a custom table and banquette are set against the backdrop of Kress Jack's hand-painted mural and hot pink string art.

After the team fixed the damage throughout and stripped out the dated and drab interior finishes, Jack applied her design skills, filling the home with color and character. An early purchase guided the interior design in a nautical direction: a hand-painted ombré paper lifejacket by Kristen Martincic that Jack procured at the San Francisco Art Fair and now hangs in a niche above the stucco living room fireplace. Additional maritime references include an antique porthole embellishing the custom front door; vintage ship ladders in the kitchen and dining area; and restored nautical sconces from an antiques store in Maine that illuminate the primary bathroom and flank the exterior entry.

Jack loves entertaining, so improving the kitchen and dining area was a top priority. In the kitchen, the moody dark mossy green walls, ceiling and cabinetry are complemented by a mix of modern and vintage elements, including the Zia Tile backsplash, globe pendant lights and working street crossing sign. A painting by Jack's mother, Jean Jack, hangs above the sink in a tramp art frame. Adding a soft touch, curtains can be drawn to hide dinner prep from view when guests are over.



Highlights in the kitchen include the mossy dark green walls, ceiling and cabinetry; globe pendant lights; working street crossing sign; and a vintage ship ladder used for shelving.

The mossy green hue extends to the ceiling in the dining area, where a custom table and banquette and refurbished chairs found at Salvare in LA are set against the backdrop of Jack's hand-painted mural and hot pink string art spelling out the word "yum." Whimsical touches like this are found throughout the house. For example, typical towel bars are traded for outstretched hand sculptures in two of the bathrooms, and a wood-and-rope sconce in the living room is subtly flipping the bird. "I don't take myself very seriously," Jack laughs.

The living room is home to Jack's favorite spot in the home — a sunroom tucked behind an arched doorway outfitted with a custom daybed. "I use it every single day," she says. "I have my coffee there every morning, and I have a glass of wine and read there at night."



The sunroom tucked behind an arched doorway in the living room is outfitted with a custom daybed.

Details

What: 2,000-square-foot, four-bedroom, two-and-a-half-bath 1925 home

Where: Mill Valley

Construction: Buildrite Bay Area

Interior design: Kress Jack