

O.C. Home

A SENSE OF PLACE

Upscale living in Villa Park, p. 98

A private, well-considered pool, p. 100

A designer's Newport home, p. 102

Melissa Palazzo's little black dress of a home





Home
as
**LITTLE
BLACK
DRESS**

Designer's
Newport
Beach project
is classic,
functional,
and fun to
accessorize

by
**BARBARA
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photographs by
LEE MANNING





PREVIOUS SPREAD

Black lacquer modernizes a French armoire while floor-to-ceiling white sheers soften the edges of the midcentury-modern home.

In the living room are Palazzo's Lily stool, inspired by a '50s flea market find, and a '40s chandelier from a Miami hotel.



1 Designer Melissa Palazzo on her charcoal-stained white oak stairs; a tall stack of firewood is both functional and graphic.

2 A grizzly overlooks 8-year-old son James' bed, which is flanked by a pair of Jonathan Adler accent lamps.

3 A vintage, Empire-style chandelier from Old Towne Orange juxtaposes the spare and modern kitchen.

4 Costa Mesa landscaper Molly Wood kept the front garden simple and drought-tolerant.

5 Space snatched from a former laundry area is now a chic little powder room, with a sink from Pirch at SoCo Collection in Costa Mesa.

INTERIOR DESIGNER MELISSA PALAZZO'S 1950s HOME, which she has done in a classic black-and-white palette, has all the qualities of a little black dress: simple, versatile, and functional. She can enliven it with pops of color, and with an easy change of accessories, dress it up or down. This suits her fine. Her Pal + Smith Collection of eclectic home decor makes rethinking her furniture and experimenting with new accessories an exercise she can do on a whim.

The Dover Shores Newport Beach home, which she purchased in 2013, is a

curated mix of her new pieces, sprinkled with well-chosen antiques. In the living room, a vintage armoire she found off an alleyway on a trip to Corsica is the focal point. Nearby, her collection's English Hudson tuxedo sofa, a Chinese scroll Akemi coffee table, and a pair of Art Deco-inspired Muse chairs keep happy company. She painted a Victorian clock a surprising pistachio hue "to add a fun twist to the room," says the designer, who loves to introduce antiques into a modern home. "They add so much warmth, history, and character."

What she doesn't like is a home with too many tchotchkes. A well-edited space is de rigueur for Palazzo, who selects each piece with care, assembling rooms from low to high "so the eye travels." Her favorite accessories—fashion books, vintage glass, and "art that makes you think"—also are used with a less-is-more ethos, because the designer is a firm believer in keeping family photos in albums rather than scattered in frames around the house. "I go crazy when I see too much stuff," she says with a laugh.

She also streamlined the facade of the

midcentury home, getting rid of the large, chunky stone and covering it instead in a smooth, hand-troweled white stucco. To create a more modern sensibility, she opened up and reconfigured rooms in the four-bedroom, four-bath space and lifted the low ceilings to a lofty 10 to 20 feet. Larger windows and new sliders replaced smaller '50s windows and doors, including a two-floor expanse of commercial glass she used to create a dramatic, light-filled entry.

Palazzo plans to move on soon and brand another home in her inimitable

style, as part of the May launch of her new online boutique home company, Halo Interior Design. She'll also continue as creative director for Pal + Smith. Her goal: to buy, remodel, decorate, and sell a home every two years. She has pared her possessions down to the essentials, so moving frequently doesn't pose a problem, even though she has three children ages 8 to 16. "I have simplified how we live," she says. "I'm really moving away from overdesigned rooms. For me, spaces need to be beautiful but simple."

Like a timeless little black dress. **OC**