

HOME

STYLEMAKER SPOTLIGHT

Rachel Seldin

By Anh-Minh Le

Growing up with a photographer father, Rachel Seldin spent many summers traveling with him — assisting on shoots and camping out along the West Coast. Her fond memories of those trips convinced her that someday she would call San Francisco home.

Post-college, though, a job with Ralph Lauren in New York City delayed her move west. “After years in fashion, I still struggled to fall in love with the industry, which was a flashing neon sign that it was time for a change,” she recalls. “Since I was always working on my own apartment, perusing aisles in hardware stores and dreaming up the best ways to make my space function well, transitioning into interiors seemed natural.”

Seven years ago, Seldin finally decamped to San Francisco. She worked for Jeannie Fraise of Lotus Bleu while earning an interior design degree. In 2011, she was ready to hang her own shingle and launched Seldin Design Studios (www.seldindesignstudios.com). Her portfolio reveals an eclectic and contemporary aesthetic, marked by a deft use of color, pattern and texture.

The designer's mantra is “a little you, a little new,” which reflects her penchant for revamping vintage furniture, as well as her overall approach to design. “Once I’ve laid the foundation of the design — making sure to find a concept that fits my client’s lifestyle — I can layer in elements that are new, innovative and offer interior solutions that are unique and creative,” says Seldin. “I always encourage my clients to color outside of the lines and push out their creative boundaries, if even just a little bit.”

Anh-Minh Le is a freelance writer in Portola Valley. E-mail: home@sfcchronicle.com

The Seldin cheat sheet

On display: “Store displays can be great sources of inspiration. I love going into HD Buttercup, Coup d’Etat and Big Daddy’s Antiques to see how they’ve arranged their vignettes and product displays. All of these stores have such a fantastic way of visually merchandising their products. Just walking through the doors can immediately yield inspiration.” (www.hdbuttercup.com, www.coupdetatsf.com, www.bdanantiques.com)

Words of wisdom: “If you love it, buy it. I still think about certain things I wish I had bought while traveling. Spare yourself the countless hours of searching for this special thing after the fact, and if you see something you like when you are traveling, buy it. Chances are you will never find it again, and it definitely won’t have the story to go along with it. These are the pieces that are worth the splurge — and the extra checked bag.”

Site seeing: “If you are on a budget, have a vision and want to experiment with a DIY project, never underestimate what can be found on Craigslist and Etsy. I have come across many gems that have turned into some of my most talked-about pieces. My most recent find was a San Francisco design company called Jeremiah Collection. Jeremiah creates beautiful mid-century-style furniture that’s unique and, best of all, he’s local and great to work with!” (www.jeremiahcollection.com, <http://sfbay.craigslist.org>, www.etsy.com)

Details, details: “A few key accessories — a unique piece of art, tabletop object, patterned throw pillow — can really polish up a room. They are fun to shop for, and there isn’t the purchase pressure like a big piece of furniture. It’s a great way to add a pop of color, top off the design or satisfy your need for some retail therapy. Two of my favorite sources for finishing touches are Gauntlet Gallery and Urban Mercantile.” (www.gauntletgallery.com, www.urbanmercantile.com)

Versatility is king: “Most everything I suggest for clients can be used in another place in their house, so it’s like getting two items for the price of one. For example, I found an Indian room screen on Craigslist, gave it a fresh coat of paint, and then mounted it on the wall behind the bed as a one-of-a-kind headboard. I value the versatility in products because this is a characteristic that makes design timeless and fluid.”



Russell Yip / The Chronicle

A few favorites



Photo by Rachel Seldin

A cozy nook: “There’s nothing better than a cozy place to sit, have a snack, read the paper or catch up on your day.”

Reupholstered vintage furniture: “I describe my furniture as ‘innovintage’ — which is a word I made up and define as: a reinvention of vintage and traditional elements to fit a more contemporary

vibe. I love breathing new life into old bones without losing the original beauty of the piece.”



Before

After



Art with a story: “Whether it’s about where it was purchased, who made it or how it came to be, I think it’s fantastic to use art that creates conversation and comes into our space with its own history. These wood panels were made from reclaimed teak wood taken from fishing boats.”