

CALM, COOL & CONFIDENT

CALIFORNIA COOL MEETS BRIT WIT IN THE
RENOVATION OF A MIDCENTURY HOME
DESIGNED FOR LAKE TAHOE'S CASUAL LIFESTYLE

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Purple. “It’s OK to say purple. In fact, it’s purple chenille,” quips Los Angeles designer Matt O’Dorisio when asked about the color of the largest piece of furniture—the living room sectional—in the Lake Tahoe house he outfitted for longtime clients. This sort of straightforward confidence, embracing the boldness of “what it is,” as O’Dorisio says, along with having an open mind, a little sense of humor, and a lot of love for the lake that straddles the California-Nevada border, proved to be just the combination that makes the interiors effortlessly chic.

“Our inspiration was trying to keep it very comfortable, to not make it too overly ‘done.’ It’s a casual lake house where we wanted nothing too precious and to keep it as authentic as we could,” says O’Dorisio, who was brought in after architects Clare Walton and Jennifer Loving re-established the original cabin’s 1947 charm and expanded the home to 4,200 square

Entry An old map of Lake Tahoe, found in the original house, sits above a vintage ski chalet-inspired bench. **Living room** A wall of local Agate Bay stone provides the backdrop to the living areas. Hits of fresh white punctuate the space in hand-stitched fish pillows, lamps, and artifacts from the original home including primitive woven side tables. **Previous pages** The lake view at dusk mirrors the home’s dusty, rugged, and watery hues played out in patterns, furniture, and found objects.



Custom furniture in the dining area includes the Windsor-look chairs, pine green trestle table, and modern console. Above the console hangs a framed piece by local artist Deborah Lawrence Schafer, who collaborated with the Tahoe Environmental Research Center to measure the effect of drought on the color of lake water. The blue is a digital reproduction of the time-stamped color measurement of the water.






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Kitchen The Aga induction range has the charming look of a European gas top with the benefit of the fire safety necessary in the High Sierras. Open shelving, a gooseneck faucet, and a trio of pendants—all with soft brass finishes—lend warmth to the fresh white subway tile. Caned Josef Hoffmann bentwood counter stools offer stability and modern classic style. **Pantry** Terra-cotta painted cabinetry, white ceramic knobs, a hand-blocked paisley shade, and a dark stone countertop lend the butler's pantry an off-beat English feel.





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feet. After the structural renovation, O'Dorisio and the homeowner began in the living room and, to O'Dorisio's surprise, with the color purple. "I resisted at first, but when we tried it, it worked." That ended up being the process with every surprising element in the decor. "We'd ask ourselves, 'Is it perfect? No. Does it work? Yes,'" he says. "And every time we added an element that would normally be thought of as too city or too sophisticated, it just worked. It's unlike any project I've done before, but I think that's why it's so special."

Trust between O'Dorisio and his client played a big role. As an artist in her own right, she "was very influential, a great collaborator," he says. It's the third house they've decorated together, so the creative symbiosis is apparent in the ease with which they composed each room. They used elements they both love including interesting artifacts that came with the house and British decor, known for embracing oddball collections and employing the quirky alongside the sublime.

In the living room, for example, old leather chaps with jaunty fringe and purple-and-white beading take a place of pride on the white oak-clad wall above the purple sectional. O'Dorisio had the chaps—found in the original home—framed in a clear acrylic box for museum-style treatment. Similarly, in the daughter's classic blue-and-white bedroom, a vintage wooden hippo adds unexpected naivete and personality.

In the stairwell niche, a well-loved table provides the platform for playing games and is brightened with a punchy blue built-in and a groovy crochet-inspired pendant. The tiny area feels at once idiosyncratic and English while also giving a wink to 1970s California lake life. "We set out to look like we found all this stuff, like it was collected over many years. We were in good shape because a healthy amount of found pieces came with the house," says O'Dorisio, who grew up summering in

Primary suite An airy rattan light fixture playfully pairs with an antique English fruitwood writing table. Carolina Irving "Mimosa Vine" linen was chosen for the bed skirt, headboard, and curtains, drawing in the varying shades of green from the outside treetops. Purple birds on decorative pillows, a homeowner favorite, add whimsy and contrast to the stripe and foliage patterns on the window seat and bed. The window-framed tub niche was part of the remodel that added full dual bathrooms.





Lake Tahoe and knew how to deftly weave primitive textiles, small furnishings, and unusual antiques throughout the house, supplementing with custom pieces.

Another unexpected gesture is the wide-plank herringbone floors that underpin all of the living areas. Typical of a Parisian flat, yes, but O'Dorisio made it work lakeside with a finish that rhymes with the wood-clad walls and ceiling and has just the right scale of chevron to pay homage to indigenous zigzag and diamond patterns deliberately woven throughout the house.

The lively patterns, colors, and curious collections work seamlessly, thanks to Mother Nature's grounding backdrop. Central to that is the 14-foot wall of native Agate Bay stone between the dining and living areas. It was constructed from the original dining room fireplace stones. The same stone exists in a fireplace preserved on the other side of the living room.

The result is a solid yet irreverent lake house that may suit an English eccentric, but it will forever maintain its California cool because, you know, it's not trying too hard. ■

Interior design: Matt O'Dorisio **Architecture:** Clare Walton and Jennifer Loving

Guest bedroom Ski-theme toile fabric, accented by black muntins, nods to Tahoe's opposite season. **Stairwell niche** Blue built-ins and an antique table found in the home add English cottage charm to a games area.

Boys' bedroom Graphic patterns wrap the bunk room and pay homage to Native American patterns of the region. **Girl's bedroom** A rattan daybed with a pastiche of indigo and pink pillows offers a reading spot. **Guest bath** Honeycomb mosaic tiles in pinks and navy cover the entire shower.