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Jessica Tompane (below) of J Hill Interiors says planning every detail in advance is key to a cohesive, thought-out design.

By Design

Timeless style at core of firm's aesthetic

By MARTINA SCHIMITSCHEK

When Jessica Tompane moved to San Diego after graduating with degrees in business and Spanish from the University of Colorado in 2008, she found what she thought was her dream job working in marketing at an advertising firm.

But the 15-hour days were brutal. She soon found herself looking for other career options, and this year she will be celebrating her 10th anniversary as owner of the interior design firm J Hill Interiors (Hill is Tompane's maiden name).

"I love being an entrepreneur. I make it what I want to make it," she said. "I can see my hard work



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paying off."

Her idea to become an interior designer stemmed from her love of decorating and arranging furniture. She also grew up in a home that had creative, one-of-a-kind décor. Her mother decorated the family's south Texas ranch in inspiring ways.

"My mom has a really good eye," Tompane said. "She used really fun, unique stuff." Among those items were deer antlers her mother would collect on the ranch to make chandeliers.

Tompane admits that her career path was unusual. She took a few basic design classes at San Diego





Lighting and hardware that complement each other add character and style.

Mesa College and started doing side jobs while working part time for a nonprofit. She came to a fork in the road when she was offered a full-time position at the organization.

Instead of taking the job, she founded her design firm in 2010, the same year she got married. Tompane now has two employees, and the three usually have eight to 13 projects in the works.

"I took a leap of faith," Tompane said. "I felt God was calling me to do it. It didn't really make a lot of sense."

The timing also seemed right. Her husband, Kyle, had decided to join the SEALs and was going through BUD/S training, so she had a lot of time to herself for pursuing her new career. The two met at the University of Colorado and came to San Diego together. The couple now has two girls, Paisley, 3, and Gracie, who was born in December.



Limitless choices in textiles and wall treatments make decorating one of Tompane's favorite parts of a redesign.

WHAT'S TRENDING?

- Gray is on its way out and brown is back, along with its neutral cousin beige.
- Ashy wood flooring and cabinets are becoming popular.
- 1980s Ralph Lauren-style florals are back in wallpaper and textiles.

The family has put down firm roots in Coronado. Their home, built by Flagg Coastal Homes and designed by Tompane, was completed in the summer of 2018. The Tompanes bought the property as part of a lot they subdivided with their best friends. That's one reason they call their home "The Compound." A removable fence divides three properties, and a gate allows all the children to come together and play.

"We entertain a lot," Tompane said. "We are blessed to have this house and want to share it." From out-of-town relatives to weekly church gatherings and parties of 100, the home is designed to welcome guests. The fence often comes down to have communal gatherings.

The home's décor reflects Tompane's timeless design aesthetic and her love of blending patterns, colors and textures. The kitchen backsplash pops with bold-patterned Mexican-inspired cement tiles, which are also used in bathrooms. Wallpaper in the master bedroom and Paisley's bedroom and bathroom add more texture and color. A rich, dark red kitchen island and cheerful coral sectional in the family room add personality and warmth. The eclectic home, which is part traditional, part contemporary, has Gothic window arches seamlessly incorporated into a coastal Cape Cod-style house.

Tompane's business is also in Coronado with an office on Ynez Place. Most of the firm's projects are local and gained through word of mouth. One exception is a 12,000-square-foot contemporary home Tompane is working on in La Jolla. The long-term project is the second home of that size she



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Jessica Tompane's home, which she shares with her husband, Kyle, and daughters Paisley and Gracie, reflects her love of color, texture and patterns. The family's kitchen (top) has a bold backsplash and red island.



A classic, timeless design can come in any style, such as this contemporary kitchen where wood and white cabinets add dimension.

has taken on. The other one, completed in Rancho Santa Fe, was a Spanish-style home where everything down to the furnishings was custom-made.

"I had full creative license. It was very cool because of that. It's a designer's dream," she said. "You learn a lot from a big project."

But whether a job is large or small, the value of an interior designer is to execute a thought-out, cohesive vision, Tompane said.

"The end product is a beautiful design, but our job is super front-loaded. We pick out every detail in advance. Everything is thought-out, so there is no disjointed design," she said. "Once you start, it's really seamless. It saves time, mistakes and hasty decisions."

"It's a luxury service, but at the end of the day the cost of our services can be a wash. It mitigates so many mistakes and delays and emotional grief," she added. "There are no rush decisions, and we buy from wholesalers ... and give the bulk of

the discount to the clients."

Wholesale prices can be up to 70% less than retail prices.

Over the past 10 years, Tompane said, homeowners have become more design savvy with the proliferation of sites such as Houzz and Pinterest that focus on trends in products and style. Her clients often request ideas they see online, but the key to a long-lasting design is to not be too trendy, she said.

Her role is to also encourage her clients to go for something bold that they like, whether it's a color or a pattern. "People are pretty risk-averse unless they have a designer encourage them," she said. She often picks a lead textile, such as a rug, and pulls elements from there.

"You need a strong vision, discipline and a good eye," she said. "It keeps me on my toes. Every day is different."

"It's been a really fun ride, and I feel like we're just getting started." 👑

TIPS FROM THE EXPERT

Thinking of remodeling? Interior designer Jessica Tompane, owner of J Hill Interiors, offers some advice before you start.

- Keep expectations realistic. Many HGTV shows rip through a redesign in a week or two, but that's not reality. Neither is the low budget on some of the shows.
- Have a budget and make sure everyone involved is on the same page.
- Start early. It takes time to do the plans and bid on contracts and even more time if city permits are involved. Most projects take a few months.
- Use quality materials to maintain resale value. If you're thinking of using low-maintenance vinyl or laminate flooring offset it with other things, such as wood cabinets.
- Plan for the worst-case scenario. If you're remodeling an old home, add 10% to your budget for unexpected repairs.
- Put your money where it makes the most sense. Kitchen and master bathrooms will most likely give the most bang for your buck when it comes to resale.