

S B L S

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MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME

home sweet home

House of Honey founder, Tamara Kaye-Honey, opens the doors to her Montecito home, revealing a space inspired by nature, community, and her signature style.

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Tamara Kaye-Honey, founder of the interior design firm House of Honey, with studios in Montecito, Pasadena, and Brooklyn, has made her mark on countless homes in the Santa Barbara community. Her all-female interior design team transforms spaces into exuberant environments that celebrate life out loud, layering colors, patterns, and textures to create interiors that feel warm, elegant, and playfully picturesque.

With the firm recently expanding its Montecito presence through the appointment of Senior Designer Nicole Robinson, who will support the area's growing demand, we step inside founder Tamara Kaye-Honey's Montecito home

to explore the vision and the visionary behind the brand.

Tamara was born and raised in Nova Scotia, Canada, later moving to New York City to attend the Fashion Institute of Technology before settling in Southern California. She refers to Montecito as her "happy place," as it reminds her of her childhood home in Halifax, Canada, which was minutes from the beach. As Canadians who grew up in cottages by the water, Tamara and her husband wanted a home that served as an escape from the bustling city and found what they were looking for in Montecito's raw, sacred land, bohemian feel, and storied past.







Nestled on a canopied, one-acre hillside overlooking the mountains and the Pacific Ocean, Tamara's Montecito home features 1,800 square feet of living space, with a 550-square-foot detached guest house. It was originally built in the 1950s by renowned female architect Lulah Maria Riggs, a pioneer who headed her own office at a time when women-led firms were extremely rare. Riggs' legacy lives on in Santa Barbara, where she designed many homes and buildings, often blending modernist and Spanish Colonial Revival styles. It warms my heart to think that Riggs' spirit is likely grinning ear to ear, knowing that the home she built is now owned by Tamara, a feminist visionary in her own right, with a successful design firm that employs an all-female collective of a dozen strong. "We love that over the years, we have attracted talented female designers of all ages and stages to join our team at House of Honey. Now, we have clients who come to us specifically because they need and want a female perspective," says Tamara.

Honoring the integrity of Riggs' original design was central to Tamara's process. "The trick was figuring out how to make the house feel open and connected to the landscape without losing the intimacy of the original structure," she says. "The glass 'cubes' became the solution. They allowed us to expand the living experience while still honoring the bones of Lulah Maria Riggs' original design," she adds.

The home's blackened cedar exterior pays homage to Shou Sugi Ban—a traditional Japanese technique that preserves wood by charring its surface with fire, creating a unique dark finish and texture. "My experience in Japan was definitely something I leaned into," says Tamara, having traveled to the country a couple of years prior. The interior design of the space, she explains, "is really a conversation between Japandi restraint and California ease. There's a Scandinavian discipline in the palette and proportions, paired with the warmth and material reverence of Japanese design."

In true House of Honey fashion, the home is intentionally filled with both new and old pieces, many of which Tamara has collected over the years. The living room features a low, sculptural B&B Italia sofa alongside pieces by Francesco Rota and Ilse Crawford. Sculptural light fixtures scattered throughout the home act as accessories, with breathtaking designs sourced from Roll & Hill, Lambert & Fils, and Bocci, along with vintage Murano glass found on 1stDibs—an online marketplace Tamara has utilized for years. Artwork by Arik Levy, Mary Little, and Elisa Anfuso is displayed throughout the space, while classic designs by Eero Saarinen and Harry Bertoia, mixed with contemporary pieces from Muuto, Ferm Living, Souda, and Bend Goods, tie everything together.





“This house is a place for family and friends to come together. It really is a home to be lived in and enjoyed by dogs, cats, children, and teenagers,” says Tamara. “We didn’t want the space to feel like a museum, but more of a place where we can all come from the beach and run around,” she adds. The design project did not happen overnight; it was a mindful process that took years to complete, from the initial concept to the finishing touches. “We approached it slowly and thoughtfully, opening up the original structure, designing the glass additions for the primary suite and guest house, and reshaping the landscape so the architecture could fully connect with its surroundings,” she says.

The home incorporates its natural surroundings into its outdoor deck—specifically what has been dubbed the “social stair”—which is Tamara’s favorite feature. “It’s built around the original boulders from the quarry site, so it feels completely rooted in the land. It’s where everything happens, from morning coffee to sunset cocktails. It’s less a piece of architecture and more a stage for life,” she shares.

As fans of the design firm know, House of Honey curates and sells its own line of home fragrances, with the understanding that design engages all of the human senses. For example, the firm’s scent, “Ortega,” is described as a love letter to Montecito, formulated to capture the scent of driving down Montecito’s tree-lined Ortega Ridge Rd. So, naturally, I had to ask Tamara how she would describe the scent of the space she had spent years thoughtfully curating—her own home. “Cedar, warm stone, and a little bit of ocean air drifting in from the canyon. The house always smells like the landscape found its way inside,” she says.

Tamara’s beautiful home appears to effortlessly marry an indoor-outdoor lifestyle, so that even when one finds themselves within the confines of the living room or master bedroom, the surrounding natural landscape is somehow always felt—whether in sight, in scent, in design, or in spirit.*