



# MOD SQUAD

TRACK LIGHTING? SHAG CARPET?

VENETIAN BLINDS? THIS SAUSALITO RENTAL WAS NO MATCH FOR FOR THE SUPERPOWERS OF BAY AREA DESIGNER **SERENA ARMSTRONG.**



PHOTOGRAPHY: SEAN DAGEN  
COPY: KAT MCEACHERN  
INTERIOR DESIGN: SERENA ARMSTRONG





"COCO CHANEL SAID EVERY WOMAN SHOULD REMOVE ONE ACCESSORY BEFORE LEAVING THE HOUSE. I FEEL THE SAME WAY ABOUT DECORATING."

When Serena Armstrong's client relocated from Michigan to Sausalito, she asked Armstrong for a space based around an Eames chair she had long been coveting. "California 60's Mod Squad was a phrase we tossed around," says Serena. But the Eames chair wasn't the designer's only inspiration: "The carpet was a cream and brown shag, so we went with it," laughs Armstrong, recalling the unique challenges of designing in a rental.

"Elements like wall color, carpet, lighting, and window treatments were already in place. Luckily, when I began the job, the apartment was being renovated, so I was able to make some improvements." So the designer painted the fireplace, enlarged the opening between the kitchen and eating area, and replaced the florescent lights above the dining table. Easy-peasy, right?



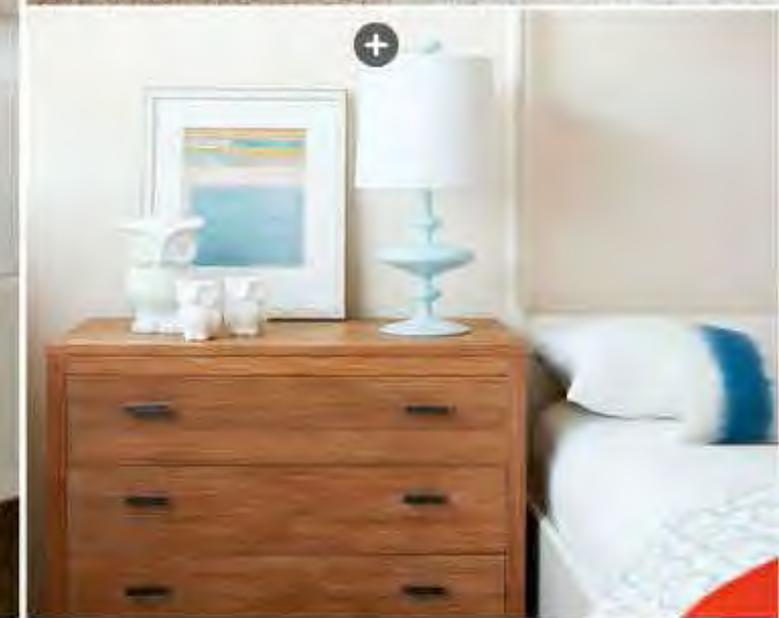
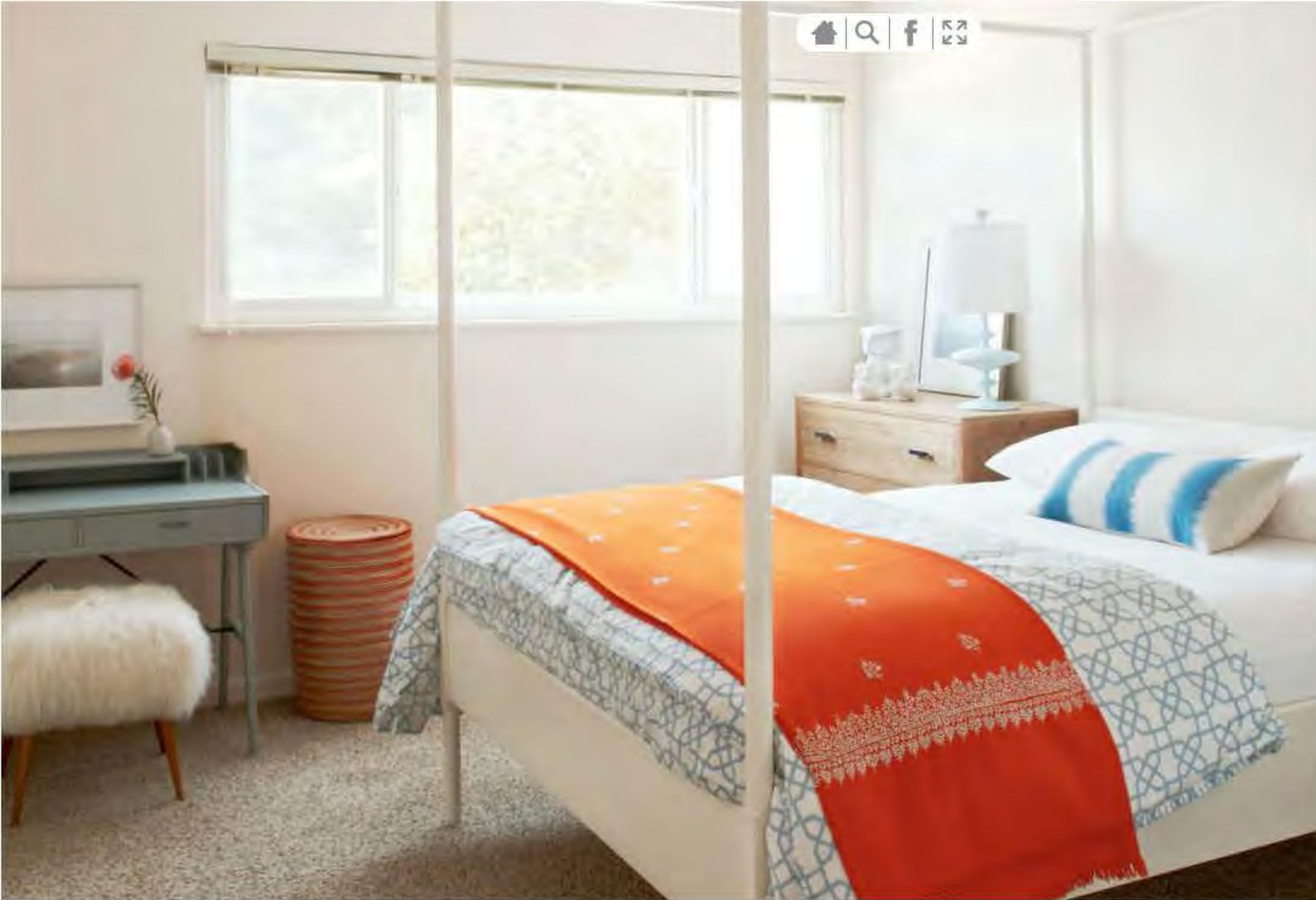


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The picture wasn't always so clear. Originally an event planner, Armstrong found herself rearranging furniture in homes for functions, and being asked by the owners to continue designing their rooms after the events were over. It was then the granddaughter and niece of accomplished decorators realized her true calling. "Looking back, most of my hobbies and even the toys I played with had something to do with decorating. Deep down I knew early on that this is what I was meant to do." She now owns FarmHouseUrban, a home décor shop in Larkspur with an online arm launching next month, and runs a design blog of the same name.

A Marin resident, Armstrong loves popping down to San Francisco multiple times per week. "The energy and culture of the city combined with the beauty and recreation of the country has influenced my lifestyle tremendously," she says. This duality is reflected in Serena's work, as in the mix of vibrant geometric patterns and nature-based photography echoed throughout the Sausalito space.



When it comes to her design philosophy, Serena turns to the classics: “Coco Chanel said every woman should remove one accessory before leaving the house. I feel the same way about decorating. I’m not attracted to bright colors, competing patterns, and lots of stuff on every surface. I like to combine textures, choose

furniture with good bones, and add just a few colors at a time. The goal is to create spaces that draw people in rather than scream, ‘Here I am!’ she says. Luckily for her client in this cozy space, Armstrong captured the perfect balance of city and country, color and calm.