



"My decorating philosophy is to never be afraid to mix styles. And to be daring and bold with color and texture—they add so much dimension."
—AMBER VALLETTA

The books in Valletta's cozy Dutch blue office are organized by hue. "I have a thing about color-coordinating," she says. Chanel dress and necklace. Dior heels.

The Many Shades of AMBER



Just because supermodel and actress AMBER VALLETTA'S Santa Monica abode is eco-friendly doesn't mean it has to be earth-toned and understated. Instead, it's a light-filled home infused with splashes of color and irresistible energy
BY LAURIE SANDELL PHOTOGRAPHED BY DEAN KAUFMAN STYLED BY TRACY TAYLOR

It's always good to share a creative vision, but few client-designer relationships are as simpatico as that of Amber Valletta and her interior designer—cum—best friend Ross Cassidy. The handsome South African, who starred on Bravo's *Million Dollar Decorators*, first spotted the model and actress seven years ago, when she was working out on the Santa Monica steps, a pair of steep outdoor staircases where locals like to exercise. "I wanted to shout, 'I loved you in last month's Italian *Vogue!*'" he says with a laugh. "but I didn't want her to think I was a weirdo." A few months later Cassidy happened to be riding his bike down a sleepy Santa Monica street only to spot Valletta hanging Halloween decorations in her front yard. This time he piped up, and the two soon realized that Valletta had actually been "stalking" Cassidy's Hamptons-style cottage near the spot of their first meeting, intrigued by the patios appointed with cushy seating, umbrellas, and lamps. She invited Cassidy in, and before long they were chatting like old friends. A year and a half later they started talking renovation—something Valletta's 1929 Spanish Revival home desperately needed.

Fated encounters such as these are a theme in Valletta's life. When she was 15 and living in her hometown of Tulsa, Okla., a scout from Italy came through the local modeling school where her single mother, a post-office worker, had enrolled the waifish blonde. "From that moment on I never stopped working," Valletta says. Serendipity was also at play 14 years ago, when she met her husband, Olympic volleyball player Chip McCaw, in the checkout line at a Linens 'n Things in Tulsa, where he also grew up. Soon after that their son, now 13, made his appearance. "Auden for sure had a plan," she says of the adorable, flaxen-haired teen. "He was like, 'I'm coming,'" arriving exactly on his due date. Valletta also sees her leap into movies as another example of random good fortune, describing how, out of the blue, Steven Spielberg requested footage of the supermodel, who had never tried acting before. "That was a strong sign that if I



In the dining area a handpainted de Gournay wallpaper mural of birds and purple flowers "adds a traditional flavor to a very contemporary space," says interior designer Ross Cassidy.



Pendant lights in the kitchen, purchased at the L.A. store. Originally used in a Midwestern factory, small appliances are tucked behind walnut panels.

The rough-hewn texture of a large stone basin in the powder room plays against glistening handmade tiles from Morocco.

A Robert Indiana 1967 lithograph anchors the living room. The throw pillows are covered in vintage African textiles, which Valletta's Chihuahua-pug mix Mumsy has "a particular taste for—unfortunately, she likes to chew them." Vera Wang Collection dress.



Valletta's office is where a team of three employees for her eco-conscious fashion Web site Masterandmuse.com gather to brainstorm new concepts.

4 Ways to KEEP IT GREEN
Every corner of Valletta's home reflects her commitment to a small carbon footprint. Here's how she does her part for planet Earth.

- 1. VINTAGE FURNITURE AND FABRICS** While new couches and upholstered pieces in Valletta's home were made custom by local artisans who work with natural fibers and sustainable woods, she also loves to collect antique pieces. "That's a version of being eco-friendly since it's a way to avoid acquiring new stuff," says Valletta.
- 2. SOLAR ENERGY** A tank-less water heater and solar panels on Valletta's roof fuel the house off the grid. "While it's expensive to install," says Cassidy, "it pays off over time." Valletta confirms: "I haven't seen a bill in a year!"
- 3. ECO-CLEANING PRODUCTS** Valletta opts for chemical-free brands that can be found at Whole Foods, such as 365 Everyday Value, Method, and Mrs. Meyer's. She also likes Begley's Best, a line of products from environmental activist and actor Ed Begley Jr. "Everything that goes down the drain eventually goes back into the water supply, so I try to do my part," says Valletta. "It just feels better, knowing that I'm probably not going to be making myself or my family sick."
- 4. AN ELECTRIC CAR** Her silver Tesla is "stupid fast," says Valletta, and gets almost 300 miles per charge. "As soon as I saw it, I said to myself, 'This is the future, and I want it now!'"

her interior designer Ross Cassidy. Pillows on a daybed in her bedroom (above, left) are covered with a vintage embroidered fabric discovered in Paris, while a carved wooden table in the living room (above, right) was picked up at a Tulsa antiques shop.



An adjoining room that leads into the bedroom serves as Valletta's meditation space and is decorated with a Beiermeyer chaise from her old New York apartment and handpainted wallpaper on the ceiling.



Hot-pink walls in the master bedroom make a bold statement. "It's such a happy, powerful color; I love the way it deepens at sunset," says Valletta.

LIFE etc.
A mix of artwork and photos creates an eclectic gallery in the upstairs hallway. A framed collage of Polaroids of Valletta snapped by Richard Avedon leans against a console table.