

# Tuscan Style

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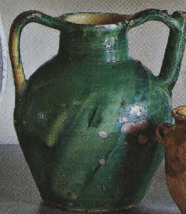
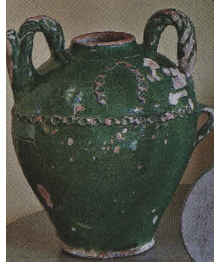
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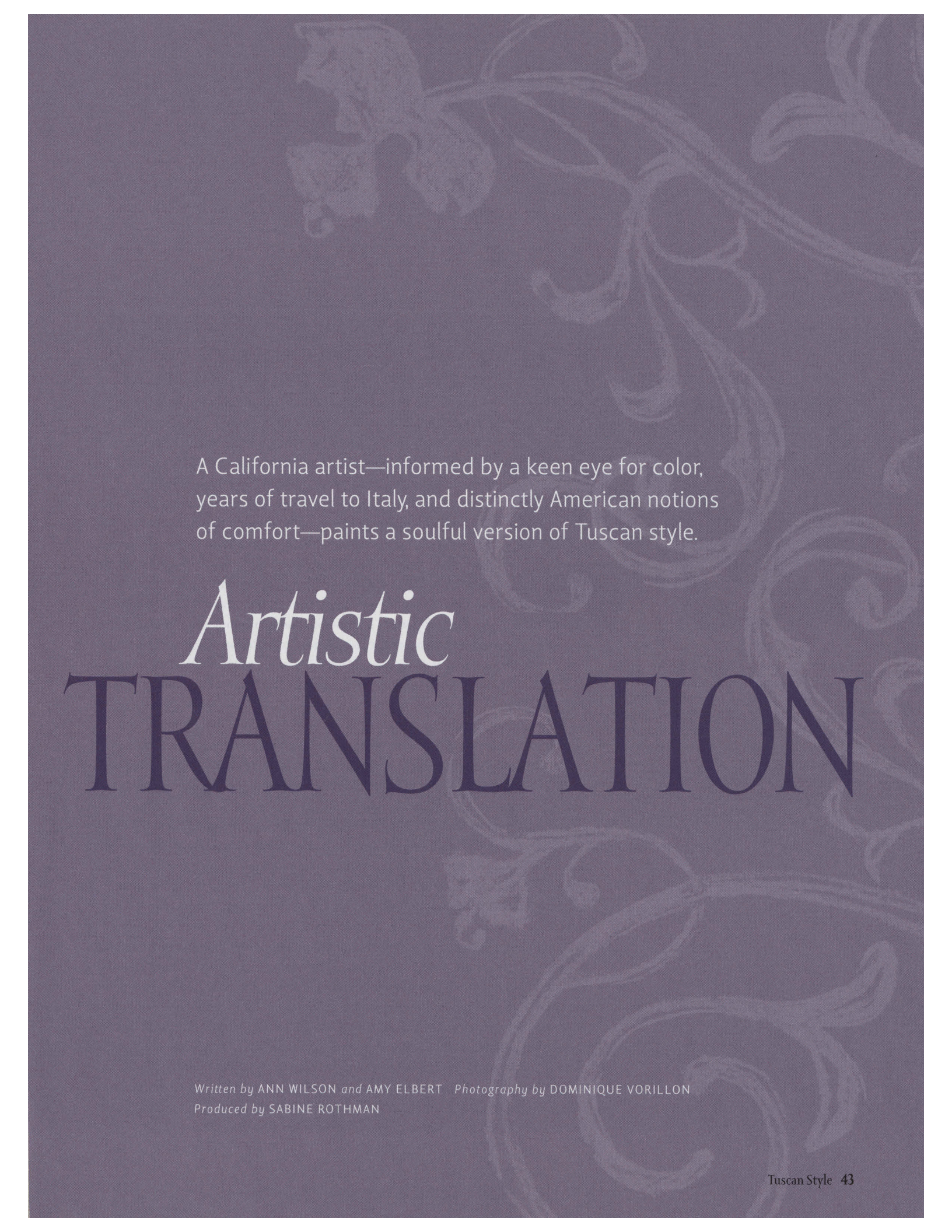
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In Carin and Tony Gerard's entry, the imperfect rusticity of an antique terra-cotta pottery collection—which includes glazed olive oil jugs and olive jars from Italy—serves as a striking counterpoint to a gilt-framed Italian landscape painting.





A California artist—informed by a keen eye for color, years of travel to Italy, and distinctly American notions of comfort—paints a soulful version of Tuscan style.

# *Artistic* TRANSLATION

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*Produced by* SABINE ROTHMAN



## The photograph in the drawer depicted a quintessentially Tuscan scene: knobby olive trees rooted in a gravel courtyard



**ABOVE:** A new master bedroom addition opens to the swimming pool, which is framed by overgrown cypresses, ivy-covered walls, and lush landscaping. **OPPOSITE:** A club chair and vividly patterned ottoman anchor the intimate library. Interior designer Hélène Aumont had the original walnut paneling lightened and an insignificant wood fireplace replaced with an elegant antique French limestone surround to foster a cozier atmosphere.

with lanky limbs outstretched toward the sun. But the image puzzled Carin Gerard. A frequent traveler to Italy, she was unable to recall where, exactly, she'd taken the picture. And then it struck. "I realized I had shot it from the inside of my house!" she says. "That's when I knew I had succeeded in creating a home with Tuscan flair."

It's no surprise Carin confused the California landscape surrounding the home she shares with husband Tony with the scenic beauty of her beloved Italy. A professional painter who returns to Italy regularly to paint, study art, and soak up inspiration, Carin speaks fluent Italian and owns a studio in a restored 14th-century Florentine palazzo that once belonged to the Medici family. So it was only natural that after she and Tony acquired a Tuscan-style home in Montecito, California, they seized the opportunity to enhance its European aesthetic. "I admire

Tuscan style for its simplicity," Carin says, "and the way it combines old-world stone and brick with new elements like glass and metal. Italians have a way of combining these things seamlessly."

What Carin wanted most was authentically burnished color, indoors and out. Though painters made 20 attempts to create the ideal shade of ocher for her home's stucco, tile-roofed exterior, Carin eventually mixed the hue herself using paints in her studio. "I brushed the color onto a piece of canvas and gave the canvas to the painters to match," she says. "To my eye, it felt right."

Carin also tapped into the talents of French-born interior designer Hélène Aumont. The designer warmed graciously sized, high-ceilinged interior rooms by covering walls with a buttery-cream shade. She then blanketed the house with sumptuous layers of textured fabrics, from luscious silk to faded linen, many embellished with Florentine tassels and trims. The result is undeniably cozy but not at all heavy. "Our home has an abundance of windows," Carin says, "which allowed us to play up a rich mix of fabrics."

Equally splendid is the collection of large Italian furnishings, light fixtures, glass, and pottery Carin has amassed through the years, which inspired Aumont to create a faithful—but not entirely strict—interpretation of Tuscan style. Carin's Deruta Italian pottery is displayed in glass-front kitchen cabinets, her leather-bound books line the library shelves, and terra-cotta pots from Impruneta, Italy, cradle flowering plants. "I love living with found objects from the flea markets in Arezzo and Lucca," Carin says. "I use many of them as props in my still life paintings. It's amazing to consider how old these objects are."

Aumont attributes the home's success to the authentic details. "Dark woods, deep teal blue, wrought iron, stone—these things are typically Tuscan," she says. "But it's the personal collections and things that are dear to the Gerards that give their house its soul."














Large plaster friezes, salvaged from a ceiling in a French castle, are mounted on a wall in the living room. Luscious teal blue silk draperies on arched wrought-iron rods soften an adjacent wall of windows. The Aumont-designed chandelier features handblown glass baubles.









**OPPOSITE:** The dining room's previously dark ceiling planks and beams were refreshed with a driftwood finish to create a brighter, more inviting space. Aumont covered the red-upholstered dining chairs with linen slipcovers and then adorned the backs with frog fasteners. "Old Tuscan furniture is super-straight, with very thin upholstery," Aumont says. "But Americans insist on comfort. So it's nice to embrace the best of the past and the really good things in the present." **ABOVE:** Silk draperies in the master bedroom frame views of the swimming pool, the Santa Ynez Mountains, and the Pacific Ocean. "The space is not overtly Tuscan, but if the overall vibe is Tuscan, it's not necessary to dissect the lineage of every little piece," Aumont says. **LEFT:** The former master bedroom, which features a corner fireplace, was converted into a luxurious master bath. A shapely paneled tub surround confers stately elegance.