

GLOSS

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Setting
a **holiday**
table

Time
to bring out
the **Tux**

Parties
Parties **Parties**





BEING SETTING: "The idea is not to have an abundance of things, but an abundance of experience," says Pam Johnson of her settings for a party. (Interior shot: Paul Kelly for Elle Magazine)



SHARIE AL FRENCH: Open French doors reveal the holy ghost of a Christmas tree, a perfect backdrop for the decorative touches. (Christmas trees on Wood's table)



PREPARING VEGGIES: Interior designer Steve Wood adjusts a plate setting in the dining room of his Golden Gate home, where the table is set for a holiday meal.

Down-home charm

Blake Woods describes his design style as crusty contemporary. "I have an appreciation for modern design," says the interior designer, "but I'm also a Texas boy. I like painted furniture that looks scraped or worn."

That said, the holiday table that Woods created in his Golden Gate dining room is a charming marriage of classic form and a casual grace. Wood's favorite chairs, probably designed in the '50s, are dressed around a Texas farm table that's thick with decorative Christmas trees and miniature ornaments.

"My home is an experiment for my professional life," says Woods, co-owner of Modern World and a principal in Madison Wood Design. "The Christmas tree collection is almost classic. It's style Americana, but the table and the chairs are not."

Holiday greens and reds are well-represented on Wood's table, but he doesn't shy away from other colors. And he pulls from a hodgepodge of sources. He picked up the chairs in Mexico, the chairs at Pottery Barn, and one set of glass from Target. Topping each setting are hand-painted Italian plates that originally do everything else together.

The natural glassware came from Emma, the local glass house in Marin. In the contemporary, well-lit space of rooms from Emma and Madeline had the idea to light the marble Christmas trees.

Woods, who grew up in California, has been designing for 22 years — half his life. He and business partner Laura More have three teenage girls and a dog named Leo. Woods before opening their design firm and opening their Golden Gate home four years ago.

Although Woods is happy to create any type of space for clients, his own 1,200-square-foot home is a classic, comfortable elegance, with oak-paneled walls that rise up in contemporary art and glassware.

"This was fun," Woods says.

The holiday table, by contrast, is almost as formal as he gets.



PAUL POWERS: Chicago folk Christmas trees cluster around the table, dressed in red in the center of the table.

What's your idea of a perfect holiday table? We asked a designer and an artist, and they came back with concepts that are yin-yang opposites. One offers go-for-broke, homey Christmas cheer. The other dreams of a quiet, intimate escape from the fray. Each is appealing. Take from them what you will, and enjoy.

A SENSE OF PLACE

Peaceful globalism

Here annual tree-decorating party is a lively affair at which piles of flashy ornaments made by artist friends cover her dining-room table. But Pam Johnson, a painter and sculptor who also owns Heights School of Yoga (where she teaches vinyasa-style, slow-flow classes), is an elegant minimalist by nature who loves pure, organic forms.

Years back at the Wisconsin Dells, she ate dinner with her husband, Carl Johnson, who runs the restaurant. Designed by Giuseppe Morandi, the high-concept, contemporary residence mimics the shape of a classical building, with the dining room at its center.

Johnson's table is also high-concept, inspired by the natural forms an important element to her work. Buddhism and other literary philosophies.

"It's the idea of stripping away layers to find the art," Johnson explains. "I imagined two people being here, both present with each other. The idea is not to have an abundance of things but an abundance of self-awareness."

To echo the home's lines, she styled modernism: simple plates and ceramic-inspired Lane bowls from Kahl-Larsen with linear-shaped wooden trays from Wood Wares Gallery, topped each place setting with beautiful, flat sculptures from David Brown Flowers. "I picked the dishes because of their contemporary look, but it started with the trays," Johnson says.

Lane and dishes inspired sometimes odd color and shape but mostly for an eat-with-eyes family before meal. They would make simple necessary to white dishes. They're all about purity. Johnson set up plates in a bowl of maple syrup that mimicked her of the table bowls. "I think people hold when they realize it's underneath it all the white lines and Asian motif of Le Jacques Frayre's 'Theater' collection, whose formality contrasts the wooden chair's simplicity.

Johnson opened an exquisite restaurant Buddha at Wood Wares Gallery and used the way it might encourage meditation at this holiday meal. She planned to make it a centerpiece, but it weighed at least 200 pounds as some to not rest on the table. "I was really into it, but it was not the best idea, but also romantic."

The Buddha was on loan for looking at it from the Johnsons' dog box. What better way to celebrate one's dining table as a temple of beauty?



LIVING LIKE LAYERS: The bowl shape recalls the form of a River-Gallery sculpture of a layered table setting with Asian and flat plates and bowls from Zeng and Johnson's collection. The Le Jacques Frayre 'Theater' collection is a French design. The sculpture Buddha, right, from Wood Wares Gallery has become a permanent resident in the room. Maple chairs could be used in the dining room. (Interior shot: Paul Kelly for Elle Magazine)





SERENE SETTING: *"The idea is not to have an abundance of things, but an abundance of awareness," says Pam Johnson of her tablescape for a quiet, intimate meal. Food styling by Julie Hettiger.*

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Every inch of the Museum District home she shares with her husband, Carl Johnson, reflects this sensitivity. Designed by Glassman Shoemake Maldonado architects, the high-concept, contemporary residence mimics the shape of a chambered nautilus, with the dining room at its center.

Johnson's tablescape is also high-concept, inspired by the sacred lotus, an important symbol in Hindu, Buddhist and other Dharmic philosophies.

"It's the idea of stripping away layers to find the self," Johnson explains. "I imagined two people being here, fully present with each other. The idea is not to have an abundance of things but an abundance of self-awareness."

To echo the flower's form, she stacked modernistic Atticus plates and origami-inspired Zaen bowls from Kuhl-Linscomb with flower-shaped wooden trays from Wind Water Gallery, topping each place setting with lotuslike faux succulents from David Brown Flowers. "I picked the dishes because of their contemporary form, but it started with the trays," Johnson says.

Lettuce- and daylily-inspired ramekins add color and might hold condiments for an eat-with-your-hands Indian meal. That would make napkins necessary; in white damask, they're all about purity. Johnson wrapped them in beaded napkin rings that reminded her of the mala beads Tibetan monks hold when they meditate. Underneath it all flow the subtle lines and Asian motif of Le Jacquard Francais' "Darjeeling" tablecloth, whose formality contrasts the wooden trays' simplicity.

Johnson spotted an exquisite alabaster Buddha at Wind Water Gallery and liked the way it might encourage mindfulness at this fantasy meal. She planned to make it a centerpiece, but it weighed at least 100 pounds so came to rest instead on the buffet. Votive candles and marigolds at the base are an offering, but also romantic.

The Buddha was on loan but looked so at home, the Johnsons kept him. What better way to celebrate one's dining room as a temple of hospitality?

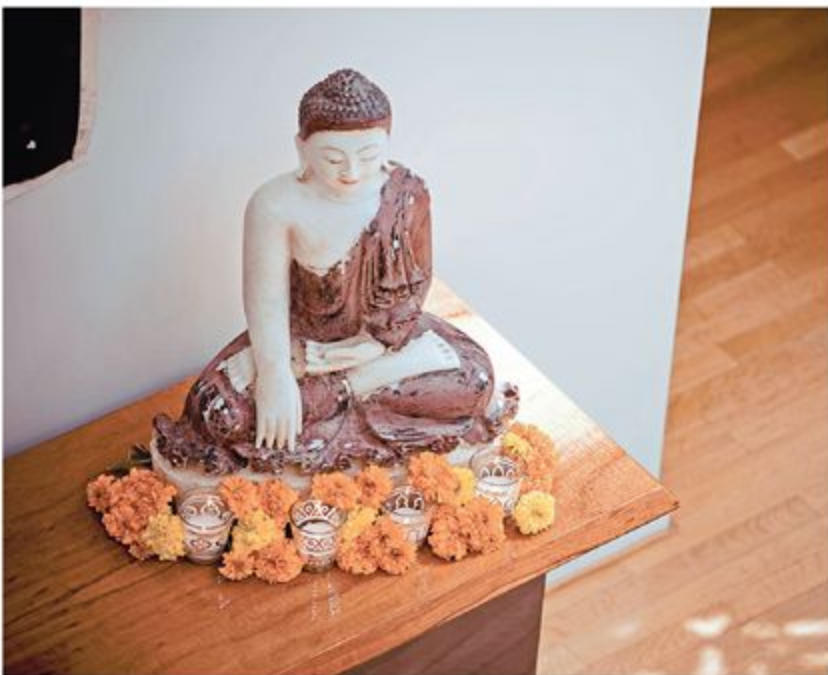
—MOLLY GLENTZER



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LOTUS-LIKE

LAYERS: *The floral shape of a wooden tray from Wind Water Gallery inspired a layered place setting with Atticus and Zaen plates and bowls from Kuhl-Linscomb and a lotus-like faux succulent from David Brown Flowers. Imagining an Indian-inspired menu, Johnson added lassi cups from Zarposh and eliminated silverware. The Le Jacquard Francais "Darjeeling" tablecloth is from Kuhl-Linscomb. The alabaster Buddha, right, from Wind Water Gallery has become a permanent resident in the room. Mango chutney could be served in the delicate South African lettuce ramekin, far right, from Kuhl-Linscomb.*



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