

Shannon Scott styles hospitality



Daniel Dreifuss photos, Staff

Interior Designer Shannon Scott in the Byron Winery tasting room in Los Olivos. Scott specializes in wineries and tasting rooms and has designed several throughout the Central Coast.

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Fashion stylists help celebrities decide on the most flattering clothes to wear on the red carpet. Sommeliers assist diners in choosing the perfect wine to go with their menu choices. Shannon Scott is a matchmaker of a similar sort.

The Los Olivos-based interior designer devises wineries and tasting rooms that expertly convey the profile of the wine that is produced or served there.

Scott's work can be seen in some of the best known wineries and tasting rooms in the Santa Ynez Valley including the Byron, Epiphany Cellars, Tessa Marie, Stolpman Vineyards, and Refugio Ranch tasting rooms, all in Los Olivos. She's also working on new winery buildings for Pence Ranch and Spear Winery, both in the Santa Rita Hills area.



"The Byron space was a fairly new building that had been built out as an office. It was a blank canvas with brand new carpet," Scott recalled. "It was then called The Bench and was to be the tasting room for four different Jackson Family Collection wines. Jackson profiles every one of their wines. So, if I were a car, I'd be a Maserati. If I were a celebrity, I'd be Pierce Brosnan. Every one has a very distinct field. They wanted a tasting room that would reflect their vision of the wine."

In practical terms that means deciding on everything from flooring materials and fabrics that will stand up to wine splatter, to cabinets and lighting, to the location for displaying bottles in relationship to natural light, and the workflow for employees and furniture for visitors.

An interior designer works with the architect from the beginning of the process, Scott explained in discussing projects in which she's been part of the team from the start. "I'm sort of a liaison between the client and the architect making sure the client's vision and needs are being translated into the plans."

For the Stolpman Vineyards tasting room, located in the iconic "little red cottage" in Los Olivos, Scott worked directly with owner Tom Stolpman.

"They wanted something that was a little streamlined and also a little bit rustic. My job is to bring that vision out and to get clear on what they mean. If you say 'country rustic' that could mean a lot of different things. Initially in our conversations I told him that what was appropriate for the house wasn't necessarily appropriate for the winery. They have this younger clientele and what he actually wanted was something much more contemporary. We shifted gears from the country feel of the house to slicker materials. We worked closely on the color palate. We added red countertops to coordinate with the burgundy red on the Stolpman label."

Tasting rooms have changed over time, Scott said. There wasn't any seating in tasting rooms. You got the people in and out. Now it's all about the experience and giving visitors a feeling of connection with the winery. They're then more apt to join the wine club and buy wine.

"It's how they're treated. People are seeking that out. They want that sense of home," she said.

New wineries that have onsite tasting rooms are also in design transition, Scott pointed out. They're being built with large glass viewing areas into the production area much like restaurants have open kitchen viewing from their dining tables.

"It goes back to the 'experience' thing," she said.

A native Californian who received her certification in interior design through a two year program previously offered at UCSB, Scott worked at the Solvang Antiques Center and a furniture store in Santa Barbara until landing her first job with a design firm, SFA Design in Santa Barbara.

"They put me right into big hospitality projects. It's where I learned to love hospitality," she said.

She worked with that firm on the Ventana Resort in Big Sur, the Sonoma Mission Inn & Spa, and the Fess Parker Doubletree Resort in Santa Barbara. When the Parkers purchased what was to be renamed Fess Parker's Wine Country Inn & Spa in Los Olivos, they brought Scott in to redo the public areas.

She then settled into Los Olivos and put out the shingle for her own firm, Shannon Scott Design.

Hospitality for Scott extends far beyond posh tasting rooms and upscale hotel lobbies, however. She's become something of the go-to interior designer for senior living communities, including the Valley's Golden Inn & Village.

It might seem an odd turn, but Scott says that hospitality is hospitality whether it's in a tasting room or the lobby of a senior center.

"Senior living spaces have their own set of unique challenges," she said. "But just as in any hospitality setting, you're working with flow and movement. I like the mix. It's why I don't have a signature look. I'd get really bored if I designed the same thing over and over. I'm not designing for me. I'm there to be the catalyst and the lens to bring it all together for the client."

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