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TWIST

on Victorian

When interior designer James Light designed the sitting room of the Portland (Maine) Showhouse, he wanted to make it everything the Victorian mansion was not—light, airy, and open.

To do so, Light traded deep coral hues and brown woodwork for a soothing palette of smoky blue, wheat gold, and bronze he drew from a painting of a local landmark showcased above the fireplace. Amid the soft and subtle palette, he demonstrates how details and texture can make a commanding statement in the quietest ways.

"I wanted the walls and the windows to be simply beautiful background," Light says. "I didn't want them to compete with the furniture." Yet the elegant details are present, he explains.

Grass cloth covers the century-old plaster walls, adding warmth and texture while hiding the evils of crumbling walls. The windows are framed with simple, unlined Belgian linen draperies in a smoky blue hue, delicately edged with sterling-silver beads. Elegant smocking across the heading and hidden Italian stringing drawing them aside to welcome the sunlight create subtle details.

"I think of a nice room as an outfit," Light says. "My grandmother used to say, 'After you get dressed, look in the mirror and take off one piece of jewelry.' I chose to make the furniture the jewelry and the walls and windows this beautiful, tailored Armani suit." ■

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LEFT: Formerly dark woodwork gave way to stark white, giving the palette the crispness needed to open the room. ABOVE: Traditionally considered old-fashioned, smocking is making a comeback in drapery headings, establishing an elegant, handmade look. RIGHT: Oak, smoky blue curtains balance the golden quality of the grass cloth-covered walls.

