

# Warm Welcome

Sophisticated yet fearless interiors invigorate a family residence in Houston.

WRITTEN BY MARGARET ZAINÉY ROUX | PHOTOGRAPHY BY KERRY KIRK



Interior Design: Jenny Vorhoff, Studio Riga Home Builder: Brandon Bowles and Wade Bowles, Total Restoration Ltd.

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ome designers find inspiration in a color palette. Others may look to textiles or art. But Jenny Vorhoff always begins with the homeowners and their story. “They could be the subjects in a Slim Aarons photograph,” Vorhoff says of

Houston client Allison O’Neill and her husband. “They’re classic and chic but total individuals—she loves ‘pretty’ and ‘punchy’ while he leans toward ‘handsome’ and ‘streamlined.’” When revamping their new River Oaks house, Vorhoff wanted the overall design to land somewhere in middle while giving each owner “moments” in separate areas throughout—something that wasn’t doable in their previous residence.

That previous residence was a loft apartment in Manhattan. Converted from a working ice house, it felt cold, and its open floor plan offered little privacy and even less separation of spaces. When the couple with two daughters relocated to Houston, they wanted to say goodbye to loft living and all things industrial and minimal. “We only knew a few people here and they all lived in River Oaks, so we didn’t search anywhere else,” Allison recalls. “It’s idyllic, with oak tree-lined streets and sprawling lawns with children at play.” To help them feel at home in their new city, they imagined a residence with that same sense of charm, graciousness and vibrancy.

And so the family quickly settled into this 1930s brick two-story house—a hybrid of French and English styles—hallmarked by all of the architectural appointments of the era. Crown molding, paneled walls and oak matchstick floors make it a complete departure from their former loft. And the traditional framework gave Vorhoff freedom to take the decor in a more daring direction than she would have in a contemporary setting, which the fearless couple gave her creative license to do. “We hung all our choices on the traditional elements,” explains Vorhoff, crediting builders Wade Bowles and Brandon Bowles, whose project manager was Steve Page, for myriad things like repainting and installing wallpaper. “The architecture really allowed us to stretch ourselves.” Locally sourced accessories and pillows add vibrant color, texture and pattern to every corner, grounded by antiques nodding to the home’s history.

All the while, Vorhoff brought a similar philosophy for layering to each space in order to create consistency and infuse the owners’ personalities. “Rooms don’t need to coordinate,” she says. “You can have a cohesive look as long as the elements—colors, textures and scales—complement one another.” In the dining room, for example, an ethnic-inspired Peter Fasano wallpaper pushes the boundaries of the inherent English architectural flair, while the dining chair fabric—Rose Cumming’s Delphinium—brings it full circle with an English Country feel. Intricate millwork in a waxy shade of green melds those two patterns with each other and the garden outside. On the other end of the spectrum, the living room’s milky-white walls and solid upholstery allow a contemporary painting by Joanne Hastie and a juicy-hued Missoni rug to take center stage. And the kitchen area features classic white walls punctuated with an Alex Frankel abstract featuring tangerine and cerulean hues, which carry over into the family room by way of the Melas geometric pattern of a vintage Turkish rug and the art flanking a limestone mantel.

Even the tiniest of spaces packs a punch. Beneath the stairwell, a textured vinyl wallcovering resembling lapis mosaic tiles wraps the walls of a jewel box powder bathroom. Notes Vorhoff, “We adored that it was not a competing ‘patterned’ paper with the graphic entry.” The custom vanity—repurposed from an antique giltwood demilune console and skirted with crewelwork on linen—offers further proof that some of the greatest gifts come in small packages.

But perhaps most striking is the nearby entry, where almost-ocher painted paneling greets guests with the same warm Texas welcome the couple enjoyed upon arriving to town. “While scheming, we allowed one design decision to inform the next—with the exception of this space,” Vorhoff recalls. “We waited for that ‘aha’ moment, and it came in the form of the paint color we selected for the walls.” The exuberant shade echoes the energy of this young family, offering an unexpected touch that just felt right. “Every house should have an element of surprise, and I love that this one is in the entry,” Vorhoff explains. “It makes a strong first impression and gets guests excited to experience what’s next.” ■



Paneled walls painted Benjamin Moore’s Golden Bounty set the tone for the interiors, radiating a sunny sensibility among refined antiques including the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Louis Philippe chest from Huff Harrington in Atlanta and a lamp from Antique Pavilion. A Couristan Cape Town Collection Antelope runner leads upstairs.

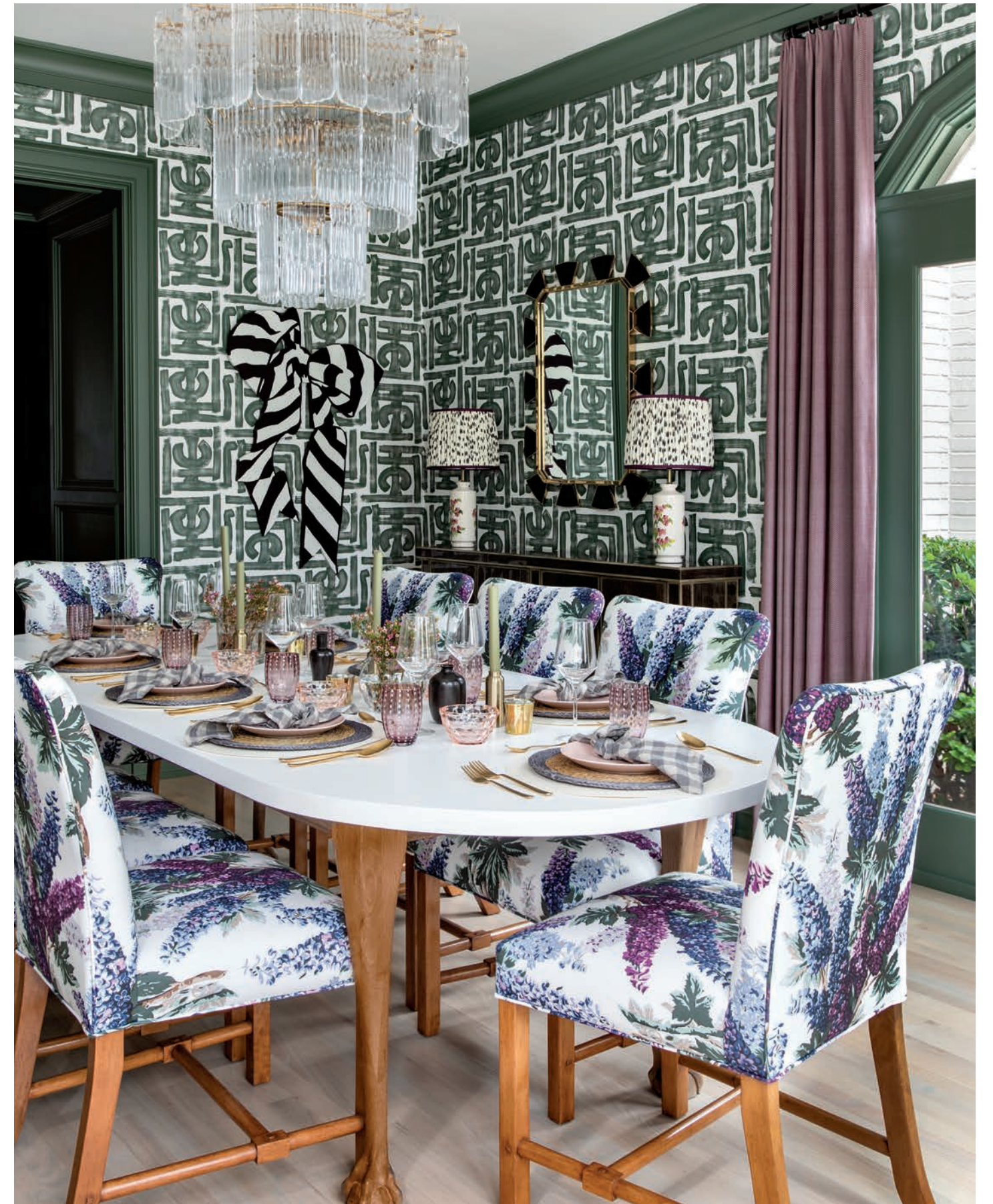


Vibrant colors and modern appointments meld with plush upholstery and large-scale furnishings in the family room. Here, Century's Marin sofas anchor the space atop a rug from Nashville Rug Gallery. A chandelier from Circa Lighting illuminates the room.



**Above:** Benjamin Moore's Peale Green coats cabinetry fabricated by Total Restoration Ltd. in the butler's pantry, which pairs a Waterworks tile backsplash with a walnut butcher block countertop.

**Opposite:** Custom-colored Peter Fasano Samburu wallpaper appears in the dining room featuring Dessin Fournir chairs upholstered by Creative Style Furniture in a Rose Cumming fabric. Vintage lamps with shades in Brunswick & Fils Les Touches pattern, a Mr. Brown London Aberdeen chandelier and Angela Chrusciaki Blehm art from Liz Lidgett Gallery + Design in Des Moines, Iowa, complete the bold space.



Rattan and floral prints appear in a girl's bedroom. Scalloped-edge bedding from Biscuit Home trimmed in marigold complements the Nina Campbell wallcovering and Anna Spiro Textiles draperies. Lighting includes a Palecek chandelier and heirloom vintage lamps on CB2 consoles. The rug is Dash & Albert.





**Right:** Natural light filters into the main bathroom through a bamboo shade from The Shade Store. Art from The Colour Study adds a pop of color to the serene space.

**Opposite:** A punchy Pierre Frey wallpaper leads to the main bedroom suite featuring walls coated in Benjamin Moore Ashen Tan. The retreat's sophisticated decor includes a Noir Ferret bed and Made Goods nightstands.

