

ALIVE WITH COLOR

A designer with a penchant for bold juxtapositions and contemporary art remodels a charming Fort Worth house for herself and her husband, and the result is exceptionally thrilling.

TEXT LYDIA SOMERVILLE
PHOTOGRAPHY
MICHAEL HUNTER
AND NATHAN SCHRODER

Leslie Jenkins puts together rooms of traditional elements with a contemporary aesthetic reminiscent of legendary decorator Billy Baldwin. A Parsons chair covered in Scalamandré tiger velvet, modern art, and a lavishly tasseled chintz chair are evidence of a deft hand at work. Built-in shelves display her artful way with arrangements.



When Leslie Jenkins and her husband, Jeff, decided to buy a classic 1920s house in Fort Worth, they intended to retain its original layout and period character. But like most interior designers working on a home for themselves, Jenkins quickly expanded the scope of remodeling beyond those original intentions. “We basically gutted it,” she says, “but we did keep the façade intact.” She moved the staircase, created a luxurious backyard with a pool as well as seating and dining areas, and transformed the second floor from five small bedrooms to three large ones—the primary plus two guest rooms for her grown children and future grandchildren. “As empty nesters, we wanted rooms that our kids would want to stay in.”

Jenkins works out of an office in Dallas, where she also co-owns interiors shop Blue Print and Blue Print Gallery. At these locations, the public can indulge in the impactful art and glamorous furnishings she loves. A devoted collector, Jenkins amassed her home’s artwork over years of travel to England and France, and the bold canvases interact with her design choices to create dynamic rooms.



The 1920s house in Fort Worth, opposite page, sits in a neighborhood of mature trees and historic homes. In the entry hall, Jenkins placed a bench beneath the painting, rather than a table, to allow the canvas to hang at eye level. This page: Another view of the living room shows a mid-century modern credenza, which unifies the two seating arrangements. Wallpaper and carpeting bring a note of menswear fabrics to the mix.



In the dining room, Jenkins achieves a flawless balance of comfortable tradition with a dash of spice. A perfectly respectable dining table and chairs get a zing from dreamy wallpaper of trailing vines and swirling bands of color. In the bar, Jenkins added mirrors and countertops to a scullery for a glamorous nook that provides ample storage for tabletop items.





A second living room, opposite page, plays the role of a poolroom, with a handmade concrete tile floor covered with a faded Oushak rug. An Eames chair and retro palm chandelier strike a strong midcentury note. Jenkins added all the outdoor spaces and the pool, left, for festive family gatherings. Jaunty awnings evoke a European café. For the kitchen, she sourced various blue-and-white patterns. The wallpaper, tile, and curtains may not match, but they play together extremely well.



In the dining room, a work by Kate Rivers, composed of strips of paper that swirl in a lush mass, hangs over the sideboard. “I had to work to find a wallpaper that could match the energy in the piece,” she says. A modern chinoiserie paper by The Mural Source with a botanical design cut through by a rushing river of stripes offers a response to the artwork’s call. The number of large canvases compete for wall space. “My old house had very high ceilings,” says Jenkins. “The ceilings in this house are lower, so I had to be deliberate in furniture choices to leave space for them. In the

entry, I chose a bench to allow me to hang the piece of art over it.” Two living rooms gave Jenkins the chance to create different moods in each space, with a formal room that could be at home in New York’s Upper East Side and the other imbued with a preppy, Palm Beach style. Throughout the house, shades of pink animate rooms of broad blue and green palettes. The primary bedroom is swathed in a rosy grasscloth with leaf-green accents and chintz window treatments. “We have to choose our words very carefully when presenting this color to husbands,” she says with a laugh.



Clockwise from above: Jenkins wrapped the future grandchildren's room in acrylic-backed, striped fabric for ultimate coziness. A pair of double beds is an upgrade from typical bunks. Kids are fascinated by the bathroom's insect wallpaper. A serene lavender palette with accents of chocolate brown distinguishes the guest room. Jenkins trimmed the walls with grosgrain tape.

Walls covered in salmon grasscloth are both universally flattering and cozy in the primary bedroom. A classic Bruntschwig & Fils floral at the windows and on the bed establish a plush, cosseted feel. For the seating area, Jenkins chose a preppy green print of fig branches in a nod to the lush garden visible from the bedroom windows.



"We call it 'salmon.' My husband loves the color."

In the kitchen, a brave mix of tile, wallpaper, and fabric patterns turns the blue-and-white scheme on its head. "I've always done mixed patterns, not matching," says Jenkins. "My aesthetic is so set that I don't really have to think about it." A charming breakfast room with café curtains, a banquette, pink chairs, and

a jaunty brass pendant light transports one to the set of *Emily in Paris*. Out the back door, a dining area and covered porch extend the house to the outdoors, with a fireplace for chilly days and a pool outfitted with arcing jets for sweltering Texas summers. If Jenkins's aim was to lure her grown children home, odds are they are already there.

