



Looking Ahead

A designer and her longtime client furnish this Houston home with a contemporary twist.

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ore than 20 years ago, one simple meeting set the wheels in motion for a lasting connection. “We had just established our firm, and I was called upon to help with color selections for a new local

client,” interior designer Sandra Lucas recalls. Six projects later, Lucas and that same homeowner continue to collaborate. “We have also become dear friends,” the designer adds.

However, their latest collaboration in Houston is poles apart from the style of that first home, not to mention the others that Lucas has designed for her. Their previous projects included formal, traditional interiors brimming with color, intricate millwork and droves of European and Asian antiques—and even mountain retreats out West with an eclectic, rustic and casual aesthetic. On the opposite end of the spectrum, this abode—originally conceived by Robert Dame Designs and constructed by Sims Luxury Builders, with finishes selected by designer Kevin Spearman—marries the hallmarks of 21st-century design. Namely, it features high ceilings, an open floor plan and banks of steel-framed windows and doors. You’ll also find slurred brick accent walls, coffered ceilings and wide-plank wood floors that bring it back to a transitional center.

“My client is fortunate to have lived in beautiful houses all over the world,” Lucas notes. “But she has always admired the air of sophistication often seen in Chicago penthouses—a style that straddles classic and contemporary.” With that in mind, the duo decided to view this project as an exciting opportunity to embrace the look and feel of that unique vernacular.

Since the home’s strong bones and high-quality finishes were already intact, Lucas was able to fast-forward to what she considers the “fun phase” of the design process: sourcing. The designer rose to the challenge of finding furniture, rugs and accessories large enough to visually anchor the sprawling rooms without overwhelming them. “I knew we would need some sizable pieces and that I would have to think outside of the box in a big way,” Lucas says.

“One of my favorite tasks is tackling the furniture plan. I love sketching on top of it to determine what fits where. It’s like putting together a puzzle.” And in the case of this home, if a piece didn’t fit, they simply customized one that did.

For the dining room, Lucas commissioned a Keith Fritz elongated pedestal table to stretch gracefully in front of the limestone fireplace, which is crowned with a drawing by Cy Twombly. Sleek dining chairs upholstered in a warm white fabric temper the table’s rich walnut stain while energizing the moody backdrop of the paneled walls in their original deep blue hue. Nearby, the desk in the study is also a special bespoke design, its comma shape configured from a walnut column that seamlessly connects to unlacquered brass legs. Not only does its fluid form fill the corner and soften the room’s straight lines and sharp angles, but it has an open base “that conjures a sense of welcome with legs that feel open and airy when viewed from the foyer,” Lucas explains. Elsewhere, in the lofty living room, plush but proportionate sofas and chairs are corralled by a large custom coffee table comprising two nesting tiers—which “is like a piece of artwork and has a sculptural quality,” Lucas describes. In fact, many of the furnishings impart such interest and volume, creating an impression that is in keeping with the homeowner’s expanding art collection.

Accenting these spaces are the client’s artworks and accessories, which span centuries. Han Dynasty figurines found in Indonesia line the office shelves, while antique tobacco jars purchased in England greet guests on the entry’s center table. Punctuating the walls is an impressive array of artworks featuring pieces by Gary Komarin, Donald Sultan, Julie Silvers, Helen Frankenthaler and more, all acquired over time in Houston, New Orleans and New York.

Art has always been a mutual passion of the designer and the owner, who are both enrolled at the Glassell School of Art. “It is an important part of this home and all of those we have worked on together,” Lucas explains. “Over the years, I have seen my client’s art collection evolve in tandem with her decorating style. She has moved in a more modern direction and, as a result, these interiors feel fresh and streamlined.” ■



The entry’s existing limestone and basalt floor tiles set the tone for this home’s eclectic interiors. Stephen Antonson’s Macklin center table from Wells Abbott is topped with the homeowner’s collection of antique English tobacco jars.

In the living room, a custom two-tier Randolph & Hein coffee table joins a Liaigre bench from David Sutherland and A. Rudin sofas. Floor lamps are Holly Hunt. A Gary Komarin piece from Dimmitt Contemporary Art appears beyond.





Left: A framed Joan Miró artwork overlooks the dining room, already adorned in Farrow & Ball's Hague Blue. Pierre Frey's Pampelune chenille velvet covers the A. Rudin chair.

Opposite: Above the dining room's limestone mantel, fabricated by Alamo Stone, hangs a Cy Twombly drawing. A trio of totem poles by Julie Silvers is from Dimmitt Contemporary Art. The custom Keith Fritz table is from George Cameron Nash.





A Helen Frankenthaler painting takes center stage in the study. Napoleon III chairs from Kay O'Toole Antiques and Eccentricities wear Fortuny's Mayan pattern. The Keith Fritz desk pairs with a Roberto Lazzeroni for Giorgetti chair from Scott + Cooner.



Above: Gracing the second-story stair landing is another striking Helen Frankenthaler painting. Murano-glass lamps sit on a 19th-century console found at Art and Antique Hunter.

Opposite: The primary bedroom's headboard dons Lee Jofa's Floral Fantasy print, complementing Schumacher bed curtains and a Leontine Linens duvet. An antique chest from W. Gardner, Ltd. and chair from Ferrell Mittman rest on a Tabriz floor covering from Matt Camron Rugs & Tapestries.

