

artful DESIGN

A mindful mix of furnishings and artwork instills a Denver home with color and character

By **MINDY PANTIEL**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **KIMBERLY GAVIN**



“INTRODUCING ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS can lend a feeling of age to a newer home,” says Camellia Interior Design’s Laura Abramson-Pritchard, who created a sophisticated, welcoming environment where a single father and his sons feel right at home surrounded by a colorful collection of contemporary art. “Along with a thoughtful blend of furnishings and fabrics,” she adds, “these elements help us feel warm and settled in a space.”

WELCOME HOME

“The existing entry was an open breezeway that made it difficult to find the front door,” says Abramson-Pritchard, who began renovation of the eight-year-old Denver residence by enclosing the entry space and designing a ceramic tile floor that complements the original brickwork (now painted white). “Our goal was to give the house a sense of history.”

That desire led the designer to choose a herringbone-patterned walnut floor that flows into the home office (*right*), where a hand-painted library table and stately mahogany desk hold court with modern elements like the painted-steel light fixture and a painting by Ian Fisher called *Atmosphere No. 5*.



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—Art advisor Ann Daley

CREATIVE MINDS THINK ALIKE

Art advisor Ann Daley collaborated with the homeowner to select artwork that was “upbeat and colorful,” like Jerry Kunkel’s painting, *out of the blue*, which hangs over the living room fireplace, now refreshed with a mahogany mantel and new tile work. “We actually bought this piece before the remodel began,” Daley says. “Our philosophy was to pick the art first and then find a place for it.”

Abramson-Pritchard used the soft orange tones in the rug as a starting point for the space. “It needed to be a place where you could put your feet up,” says the designer, who covered the living room chairs with cut golden chenille to create a sleek but inviting profile. The smaller windows are covered with sheer ruched linen curtains; beneath them, a pair of upholstered benches provides extra seating.

Creating a tied-together look, the electric-blue silk drapes jibe perfectly with the color of the script in the painting. “I hadn’t even seen the painting when I selected the fabric,” Abramson-Pritchard says. “The fact that they coordinate is a happy accident.”





A STEP FORWARD

The refurnished staircase, which has the same footprint as the original, features new walnut treads and risers and custom ironwork with a repeating curved pattern. On the landing, a woodcut print called *Fact and Fiction*, by Montana artist John Buck, showcases two figures and an open book. “It’s a very philosophical piece that invites you to draw your own conclusions,” Daley says.



BALANCING ACT

“For me it’s called conversation,” says Abramson-Pritchard about her deft hand at mixing furniture styles in the family room. “Every pattern and color has a voice and balancing those voices is critical.”

Starting the dialogue is an open wood frame Michael S. Smith chair that provides a sculptural element without overwhelming the space. “It’s a piece that makes you stop and look, but it’s not so ‘loud’ that it can’t sit next to furniture upholstered in a busy pattern,” she says, referring to the Jane Shelton chair, which is covered in gold chenille with a chocolate brown diamond print. The custom cherry bookcases ground the space; a picture by Manuel Neri, called *Untitled X*, from Robischon Gallery, balances the room.

ECLECTIC INFLUENCES

In the dining room, an existing set of windows was replaced with one big opening that floods the formal space with natural light. The homeowner’s Asian-style table sets the tone for the curved oak Jiun Ho side chairs and soft walnut Burton-Ching end chairs. “The elements in the dining room represent the yin and yang of the whole house,” says Abramson-Pritchard.

Working with a chandelier design from Ironies, the designer did some tweaking by darkening the iron and hand-selecting the strings of tumbled sea glass. “The etched soft blue glass has a coastal feel to it,” she says. Danae Falliers’ pigment print photograph, *Semi 10*, completes the space.





TOUCHED BY NATURE

More Asian overtones are evident in the master suite, where a framed section of hand-embroidered silk wallpaper hangs against a yellow wool wall covering. “The paper has the feeling of chinoiserie and is so beautiful we decided to treat it like a piece of artwork,” says the designer, who selected a tan Egyptian cotton bedcover for the maple frame bed to complement the wall hanging.

Part retreat, part hangout, the bedroom’s sitting area is where the homeowner likes to lounge with his sons and watch TV. The playful chenille pattern on the intricately carved ottoman makes a serious piece less fussy.



artful WISDOM

Art advisor and former associate curator for the Denver Art Museum Ann Daley talks about tapping the local art scene.

Why Denver?

“There’s an abundance of great artwork right here in Denver,” says Daley, who selected all the pieces for this house at local galleries. “People think they have to go to New York or other big cities to buy art but that simply isn’t true.”

Where To Begin

“Look at as much art as possible. See what each gallery has to offer and start paying attention to what attracts you,” says Daley, who also recommends creating a database to store notes about your likes and dislikes.

Educate Yourself

Don’t be afraid to ask questions. Go to exhibit openings where you can meet the artist—another advantage of buying locally—and learn more about individual pieces.

Don’t Be Intimidated

“The good news is this isn’t New York, where even professionals like myself feel intimidated sometimes,” Daley says. “Gallery owners are happy to have people just come in and browse.”

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A WARM, FRESH BATH

After gutting the existing bathroom and rearranging the floor plan, the designer chose custom walnut cabinets and a pink marble mosaic tile to redefine the space. The carved screens, reminiscent of punched stone jali screens from India, create a sense of privacy, and the walnut light fixture in the shape of a shell is another reference to the sea. Over the tub, photographs of leaf patterns by Jerry Kunkel give a nod to nature and unite elements in the bedroom and bath. “They work with the Asian feel of the suite and complement the wood tones and silk wallpaper,” Daley says.

In the end, Abramson-Pritchard says the result is successful because the interior design and the artwork were treated with equal importance, so they both shine. “Ann and I really listened to the client and worked hard to select things that were likable and interesting,” she says. “With that approach the art and the design will almost always work together.” □