



# Southern Charm

This modern Texas cottage combines unexpected elements to reflect the homeowner's distinctive personality.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY MELANIE JOHNSON PHOTOGRAPHY

WHEN IT COMES TO CREATING A DREAM HOME, CHARACTER IS ESSENTIAL. INTERIOR DESIGNER ABBE FENIMORE KNOWS THAT A HOME SHOULD REFLECT ITS OWNER. SHE DESIGNED THIS PRAIRIE-STYLE COTTAGE IN DALLAS TO MATCH THE HOMEOWNER'S LOVE FOR MODERN AND VINTAGE, INDUSTRIAL AND RUSTIC—ALL BY BALANCING THE SUBTLE AND THE BOLD.

## SCALE AND FUNCTION

"When I approach a project, I usually begin with the floor plan," Abbe says. With this home, she didn't have to start from scratch. The home's original owners were an architect couple who had designed the home themselves, so Abbe wanted to preserve the architecture as much as possible. "It's important to keep the integrity of the home," she says. "It's easy to update and modernize, but keeping original elements adds strength and depth to the space."

While most of the architecture worked well, there was an overabundance of wood. "It was all you could see when you walked in," Abbe says. The floors, the ceiling, the cabinets and trim—even the railing on the stairs was the same stained hardwood. "It's not a huge home," she says. "It's supposed to be open, not cavernous."

**The chandelier was a DIY project** designer Abbe Fenimore created to combine an elegant lighting fixture with industrial elements. The crystal and metal complement each other and create a unique piece that catches the eye.



The neutral palate of the couch and pillows draws attention to the other focal points of the room, such as the art on the walls and individual spots of color.



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The wood made the space feel too big for its shoes. "We had to reign in the hardwood," Abbe laughs. To do this, she painted a gray wash onto the cabinets, trim and stairs, which created more subtlety and restored a better balance between intimacy and space.

## BLEND DIFFERENT STYLES

For the walls and couches, Abbe chose a subtle palette of gallery-like colors. The walls became a canvas backdrop that emphasized the other design elements. She was then ready to add pop and color. Abbe didn't restrict herself to a single style—she combined different elements to create a space with its own eclectic vibe.

The trick to the perfect style combination is to keep an eye open for opportunity. Abbe knew the kitchen area needed a lighting feature to break up the large empty space. She found a chandelier at a local antiques shop, but the homeowner was wary. "She didn't want it to be too girly," Abbe says. To fix the problem, they hung the chandelier with industrial hardware: a pulley system with rope and metal hooks. The fixture is now a central feature of the room—urban, unique and vintage, but not too feminine.

## PICK A STAR

The house became an extension of the homeowner's personality. "Most of the style is based on accents that added random pops of color," Abbe says. She often went shopping with the homeowner at local antiques markets and design stores, and the pieces they brought back have their own unique style that fit into the overall



**The mounted horse** head was a gift from the homeowner's stepfather. Abbe used the single piece to build a motif of equestrian art throughout the home.









**OPPOSITE | Abbe added an island to the kitchen,** which serves both as a space to cook and a place to eat. This saves floor space and makes the kitchen and living area feel like one room.

**Instead of matching all four barstools,** Abbe mixed bold modern with industrial rustic. The resulting collection adds both pop and flavor to the space.



feel of the home. "The homeowner has an eye for pieces that are cool and different," she says. Even objects that seem to belong to different styles can work together in the right setting.

In each room Abbe started with a single central piece. "For the living room, it was the orange easy chair." The chair led to other bright, bold pieces such as the red barstools and electric "LOVE" sign. In the TV room off the main living area, she started with a marbled side table. This made way for a marbled rug, fluffy pouf and shaggy pillows.

The key to creating a dream home is to know what you love. "I tell people not to worry about trying to make their décor look like a model home," Abbe says. "If you only decorate with what's trendy, you might find that you don't like your house in a few years." Instead, she tells her clients to incorporate what they love. They'll enjoy their décor for decades to come.

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**TOP | Abbe layered animal-hide rugs** over the natural carpeting for a lush, layered effect.

**RIGHT | The same clunky stairs** from the first floor originally climbed up to the loft. Abbe replaced them with a streamlined floating staircase that contributes to the modern feel of the room.





Up here close to the roof, Abbe capitalized on the wood elements by adding a desk of the same material. The white walls provide a counterbalance to the hardwood ceiling.







## Elements of Style

IF YOU'RE LOOKING TO  
MAKE AN IMPACT IN  
YOUR SPACE,  
HERE ARE THE KEY  
PLACES TO START.

**Color.** If you don't know what color palette to choose, flip through some design magazines and websites. Mark all the pictures you love and compare them. What color theme emerges? It could be a specific shade, or it could be an overall color scheme such as pastels, brights or neutrals.

**Materials.** The material and texture you use will contribute to the overall feel of your home. Are you attracted to sparkle and shine? Look for pieces that feature rhinestones and glitter, like a chandelier with hanging crystals or throw pillows covered in sequins. If you love the outdoors, use natural materials in your décor. Mount a branch on the wall over the mantel or use pinecones as bookends.

**Art.** This is a great way to display your individual taste. Find paintings and other art pieces you love and use them as centerpieces in your décor. If you like to travel, bring pieces home from other countries and cultures. They'll remind you of your adventures.

**Hobbies and Interests.** The activities you do in your free time make your personality. If you're an athlete, display your skateboard, pointe shoes or old tennis racket. If you collect stamps or bottle caps, frame them and dedicate a wall to your collection.



**Abbe let the art piece dictate the direction of the bathroom.** The pale purple walls pick up on accent hues in the painting, and the textured ceiling adds unexpected interest.







**The TV room is a place to hang out** and get cozy, so Abbe used textures that are soft and inviting: fluff and shag, with a soft rug and large, plump pillows.

**OPPOSITE | The bathroom sink was a set of drawers** Abbe found at an antiques store. She added modern elements to the piece with the white ceramic bowl and metal faucet.





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**A forest of greens** shelters the front of the house from the open street. Abbe made good use of the wide porch with a full dining room table and comfortable easy chairs. Visitors can escape the Texas heat and enjoy a cold can of soda as they relax.





