



# EASY ELEGANCE

By JULIE CATALANO | Photography by PAUL FINKEL

When an active family wanted time together but also time apart in their newly remodeled four-bedroom home in Austin, they called on Austin/Minneapolis Interior Designer Martha O'Hara, president and owner of Martha O'Hara Interiors, to make it happen.

O'Hara worked with design director Carrie Ellington on furnishing the home just as the extensive remodel by Tom Krager of Krager General was being wrapped up. "We were working with a wonderful layout," says O'Hara. "We wanted the personality of the home to fit the personality of the family — warm, comfortable, casual but sophisticated, and a freshness that would blend old and new."

The L-shaped layout of the great room, open kitchen and informal dining room make up "the center of the house and the natural gathering spot," says O'Hara. "We wanted furnishings that would hold up to the family's busy lifestyle." The Swaim sofa is covered in a light grey-taupe herringbone fabric. A similar weave on the Baker chairs lends a vibrant citron color to the room, while a sleek cut-velvet oversized ottoman looks the part

in a room that's both refined and comfortable. Triple French doors open to the patio, making indoor-outdoor living easy.

As for the family's "alone" time, the design is a study in contrasts; specifically, a study each for the husband and wife "that reflects their personalities perfectly," says O'Hara. The husband's library is pure masculinity without being overbearing, with casual animal-themed accessories. "A custom long-horn bull art piece was commissioned for the space by Ellen Willis, a local Austin, Texas artist and family friend of the homeowners." The textured woven damask fabric of the draperies provides balance against the high ceilings of the room.

The animal theme continues in the wife's study with a zebra rug and peacock artwork — but that's where the similarities end. Bright pink chairs and the oversized floral print cus-





tom linen draperies offset the dark wood flooring. There's also room for their son to pull up a chair, although he has his own upstairs space to indulge his passion for music and aviation, along with that all-important place to watch television with his friends.

Another design requirement was the blending of traditional and contemporary in a house that O'Hara describes as having "the casual feel of Texas that can also be easily dressed up for more formal entertaining."

The focal point of formality is the dining room ("The homeowner wanted us to think of it as a jewelry box," says O'Hara), but with a fresh, up-to-the-minute look. The table for eight boasts an unexpected grayed finish and comfy upholstered chairs. Underneath is a striking wool and silk Fay + Belle custom rug from Nepal; overhead floats a traditional but clean-lined crystal chandelier.

One challenge was the flooring. Although the existing limestone tile that ran throughout was beautiful, the slightly peachy hue didn't always complement the home's furnishings. The solution? "With carefully chosen custom rugs from Fay + Belle, we could pick the exact colors we wanted that stood up to the color of the floor," says O'Hara. For example, the Tibetan wool custom rug in the entry sets the tone for all of the impressive custom Fay + Belle rugs to follow, including the simple herringbone patterned rug in the great room.







The family dog enjoys being the center of attention; greeting guests entering through the spacious front foyer that opens to the great room, kitchen and informal dining room. A cerused oak chest from Schumacher in the entry is “a new piece with a casual finish that ties in well with the homeowner’s more formal brown mohair armless bench,” says O’Hara. The entry also accentuates the openness of the house. “From there you can see straight through into the outdoors and pool area.”

Another must-have was a gender-neutral guest room, once again combining traditional design with a casual influence. The window treatments are cool sheers with an equally cool touch of embroidered hopsack-type circles. “Sheers and burlap. It’s very yin and yang and a good example of casual elegance.”

For the homeowner, the blending of styles was a success. “The house leans more Texas traditional in style, but with a fresh feel and playful sophistication that spoke to our clients’ aesthetic.”

Most of all, the family treasures their solitude without feeling isolated in their customized retreats. “My husband is retired with no need for an office or even a desk, just a comfortable space to read his newspaper and watch the news, away from the fray,” says the homeowner, who needed a more traditional desk-and-computer office for her charity work. “We’re all very happy in our individual spaces and happy when we come together. That’s been the best part.” ♦

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