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# LIGHTENED UP

A HOUSTON FAMILY MAKES THE MOST OF THEIR RENOVATED ABODE WITH OPEN SPACES AND A WELCOMING INTERIOR FEATURING A MIX OF STYLISH FURNISHINGS.

WRITTEN BY **KIMBERLY OLSON** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **TRIA GIOVAN**

**INTERIOR DESIGN** Courtney Hill Fertitta, Courtney Hill Interiors  
**HOME BUILDER** Marcellus Barone, The Southampton Group  
**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE** Randy Fajkus, Fajkus & Company, LLC  
**BEDROOMS 4 | BATHROOMS 7 | SQUARE FEET 6,868**



It wasn't easy for a Houston couple, both busy executives, to find a home that had a sprawling yard in West University Place. But after two years, one finally popped up. "It was really about finding the lot, and then we would do whatever we needed to do to make the house what we wanted it to be," says the wife. The home's layout suited the couple and their two young sons, but the interior simply wasn't their style and needed an update. "There were wood-beamed ceilings, and it was very dark," says Courtney Hill Fertitta, the couple's designer. "And there were a lot of bright colors. The owners prefer a cleaner interior, with a mix of antiques and modern art. So when I walked in, I knew what we had to change."

Hill Fertitta aimed to design a light, youthful look for the couple. "I strived to create a family-friendly environment that would also function well as a sophisticated entertaining space," she says. Adds the wife, "We entertain a lot—cocktail parties and sit-down dinners—but also host family events, too. We wanted our home to be the kind of place where our kids and their friends would want to hang out, where we could really use all the different spaces both inside and out."



The family room of this Houston home, designed by Courtney Hill Fertitta, features serene neutral tones. Sofas are covered in a textured velvet by Holly Hunt. A Stark rug grounds the space. *Left:* The entry includes a secretary purchased at Aero in New York paired with a stylish Anastasia stool, from Bungalow Classic in Atlanta, upholstered in Donghia fabric.



An existing carved table, which the couple purchased from Shabby Slips for their previous dining room, looks right at home in their new breakfast area and is surrounded by chairs from Restoration Hardware. The rug, from Creative Flooring, picks up the geometric lines of the light fixture from Area. Vibrant artwork on the wall is by Sydney Yeager through C2 Art Advisors.



Above: Bathed in natural light, the kitchen includes custom barstools (foreground) covered in Nobilis fabric, which pull up to a honed Calacatta marble countertop. Custom cabinetry continues the room's sophisticated white-on-white palette. Left: A farmhouse sink and faucet from Fixtures & Fittings stand out against backsplash tiles from Ann Sacks.



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In order to fully utilize the home's spaces, the most extensive renovation took place in the kitchen area. "The kitchen was almost like two spaces—the kitchen and a breakfast room—which made everything so small," Hill Fertitta says. Therefore, builder Marcellus Barone and his team tore down the wall separating the two areas and replaced it with a bar. "It's a big change," Barone says. "They're a close-knit family, and the area is now a nice gathering spot for them." To lighten up the kitchen, the dark wood ceiling beams were removed and the honey-colored cabinets were replaced with sleek white cabinetry. "Courtney designed all the cabinetwork, and our carpenters executed her vision," Barone says.

Meanwhile, in the family room, rustic beams were replaced with a crisp white coffered ceiling. Built-in bookcases also were added to display the



A cozy sitting area in the dining room includes Rogers & Goffigon velvet tufted chairs from Bungalow Classic that sandwich a vintage table lacquered with a custom stone top. Custom draperies made from a Nancy Corzine silk through Allan Knight Associates frame the view.



Guests can enjoy fireside dining at an oval wooden table from Carl Moore Antiques. The couple's own chairs were re-covered in a striped Scalamantré fabric, while the custom head chairs feature leather by Holly Hunt from George Cameron Nash. A touch of old-world flair comes from the owners' existing chandelier.

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family's books, accessories and photos, and a cozy banquette was nestled into one wall. "That banquette was Courtney's vision," says the wife. "It's one of my favorite places in the whole house. When we have parties, people sit in that little nook to chat."

The couple gravitates toward quality furnishings that aren't too trendy and will last through the ages, and much of the furniture from their previous home was kept intact, although Hill Fertitta re-covered a few pieces to work in their new digs. Case in point: "The study is this interesting blue-green color," Hill Fertitta says. "It's a masculine room, but it's also incredibly elegant. There are two chairs in the space that were a driftwood color with very plain linen upholstery. We turned them into these sophisticated, dressy chairs just by lacquering their frames in a light blue tone and covering them in a striped velvet."



Above: A custom four-poster bed takes center stage in the airy master bedroom and is outfitted with linens from Longoria Collection. Chairs from Watkins Culver Antiques & Design are covered in fabric by Chelsea Editions. Right: The elegant master bathroom includes Carrara marble tile flooring from Materials Marketing and countertops from Walker Zanger.

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Outside, landscape architect Randy Fajkus created a program that coincides with the owners' lifestyle. "I've known the family for a long time, and my goal was to create areas that reflect their inviting hospitality while at the same time maintaining their organized routine," says Fajkus, who used plantings including boxwood, Indian hawthorn and Asian jasmine to create the clean, trimmed look the owners desired.

"Our home is a happy place for us," says the wife, who couldn't be more pleased with the result. "I love that it's elegant but not too formal; comfortable and livable yet a bit eclectic at the same time." Concur Hill Fertitta: "One of the most fascinating aspects of this project was the complete transformation inside. Now, it's such a bright, light-filled space." **L**



The study received a complete facelift; the wool drapery fabric by Joseph Noble from Culp Associates inspired the room's blue hue. A masculine Baker desk is paired with a tufted seat from Hickory Chair. The table lamp by Mary McDonald for Robert Abbey adds a sculptural accent, while the Stark rug softens the space.



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