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WITH A FRESH EYE

AFTER MOVING HIS FAMILY TO HIS OKLAHOMA HOMETOWN, AN INTERIOR DESIGNER WELCOMES THEIR 1918 HOME TO A NEW ERA, QUIETING ITS TRADITIONAL DETAILING WHILE BRINGING TOGETHER THE MIX OF LOOKS THEY LOVE.



den

Designer Dustin Dorr turned the formal dining room into a den where he and his wife, Sarah James, watch TV and play card games with their kids, Anders and Malou. "It's our most comfortable, most used space," he says. "I like that it's cozy and close to the kitchen."



A bold rug sets off the clean-lined chairs and tables.



before

living room

“Backgrounds are the first thing I think about,” Dustin says. “I like to white out things so the focus is on the art and objects.” Painting crown molding the same white as walls was his way to downplay the traditional millwork. It gives the living room an updated look, as does the dark gray paint on the doors, sashes, and mantel.

After 21 years away, Dustin Dorr and Sarah James returned to their hometown of Oklahoma City. They felt pulled back to raise their kids close to family, yet they weren’t looking to re-create their own childhoods. “We wanted to experience this city as a whole new place rather than the place we grew up,” Dustin says.

They eventually found an old house with a stucco exterior and Spanish architectural influences that reminded them of homes in Southern California, where they last lived, and Santa Fe, a favorite place to visit. The dated interior didn’t faze Dustin, who knew he could flip the script. “I’m kind of pushing the boundaries and making this house ours—creating something that reflects us and where we’ve been,” he says.

Dustin’s first love is midcentury modern, but he says, “that alone is overdone and boring.” So he sprinkles in flea market finds, formal antiques, and new pieces. But first he simplified the backdrops and surfaces. “When you neutralize,” he says, “new, old, and everything in between work well together.” He didn’t take things too far, though, to keep the home’s historical integrity. “It feels correct, yet up-to-date and fitting for our life.”



A hand-rubbed aging solution gives the brass curtain rods a dark, always-been-there look.



Two sitting areas—one set off by the rug, the other along the window—make efficient use of the long space.

front yard

In a bit of a rebel move, Dustin replaced the grass lawn with a xeriscape garden of stones and drought-tolerant plants that will survive an Oklahoma winter. “It’s going against our rolling green lawns here, but it piques people’s interest,” he says. He retained the trees that keep the house rooted in tradition. “We have giant pecan trees and blue atlas cedar mixed with yucca and cacti,” he says. “The unexpected mix is key.”



kitchen

Grayish green kitchen cabinets counterbalance a pink backsplash and checkerboard floor. “We really went for it on the floor and backsplash—those were risks for us,” Dustin says. Both the checkerboard pattern and the hex tile have traditional references, but the larger scale updates the look. A midcentury tulip table base topped with a new piece of marble fills the breakfast nook. “It’s a small space, but it has such a great feel,” he says.

“A bold color on the front door prepares visitors for what to expect inside,” Dustin says.



The dentil molding, a holdover from a previous owner’s remodel, nods to the home’s traditional styling.



Shelves replaced boxy upper cabinets to help modernize and visually open the small kitchen.



primary bedroom

"We feel lucky," Dustin says, of having a bedroom fireplace. To mimic the look of the living room fireplace, he replaced the tile surround with white marble and painted the rest of it blackish gray. His usual rule of thumb next to the bed is to use matching lamps if there are mismatched nightstands and vice versa. Here, though, he went mismatched for both and used old chests as night tables. Window treatments are natural linen pleated curtains. Hanging just one panel on the outer side of each window streamlines the look. ■



before

Dustin restored oak flooring under the carpet and swapped one vintage light for another.

primary bathroom

The vintage desk, right, is Sarah's vanity and where she records videos for her beauty blog, *Whoorl*. Dustin had the wall behind it plumbed for a possible future tub. Shiplap hides some of the old home's settling issues by evening out where the ceiling meets the wall—a less invasive option than tearing out the ceiling. "It makes the room almost go a little beachy, which tells a little bit of our story too," Dustin says.



Dustin chose the old-school reddish marble vanity top as a surprise—"like it could have been here the whole time," he says.

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