



HOUSTON

# IN THE PINK

AUSTIN INTERIOR DESIGNER JENNIFER GREER HARTMANN HELPS AN ENERGETIC COUPLE COLOR THEIR WORLD IN A VIBRANTLY RENOVATED RIVER OAKS HOUSE.

*By Helen Thompson // Photography by Reagen Taylor*

The homeowners replaced the kitchen's original double-hung windows with a wall of gridded windows that open the quartzite-topped dining island to the backyard. Lawson-Fenning's blackened steel Elysian counter stools provide seating beneath a porcelain and brass pendant by Apparatus.



Don't judge a book by its cover, the saying goes. The white slurried brick facade of a two-story Tudor in Houston's River Oaks neighborhood is the soul of restraint: symmetrically elegant with two gables and wings on either side of the dwelling. That's if you drive by in the day. At night, the views through black gridded steel windows offer another prospect, not unlike the enticing vistas you may remember viewing inside those sugar-coated Easter eggs of long ago. For starters, there's a gold room on the left, and at the back, a room three stories high with a glass ceiling. You'll also see a lot of pink. Your drive-by view is a glimpse into a world where restraint and exuberance intersect. That's tricky territory, and it has been expertly navigated by Austin-based interior designer Jennifer Greer Hartmann and her clients, an energy trader husband and filmmaker wife with a vision.

This is the second project Greer Hartmann has master-minded for the couple. It's more orthodox than the first project, a rush job the designer completed in three months without ever meeting her



Clockwise from top: In the living room, the understated pattern in the SHIR rug keeps things subtle beneath pink-upholstered barrel chairs; in the master bath, Calacatta Gold hexagon tile and Calacatta marble countertops are reflected in the floor-to-ceiling mirrors; casual dining is a special experience in a room papered in handpainted black silk.



The three-story-high, glass-ceilinged dining room is all drama, with ebony-stained wide-plank European oak floors underfoot and gridded glass overhead that complements the steel-gridded doors. Walls are painted with Benjamin Moore's Balboa Mist, a serene backdrop for the hunky metal-topped Restoration Hardware table and green velvet Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams dining chairs.

clients, who found her via an internet search. “They had bought a house in Austin and wanted it finished in time to celebrate Christmas,” says Greer Hartmann.

Two years later, the filmmaker and her husband decided to buy another house, this time in Houston. By then, they had met Greer Hartmann in person, and they called her in again to see what she could do to the 4,700-square-foot River Oaks charmer. Much of the brown brick house, built in 1929, was in original condition. That was attractive to the dynamic husband-and-wife duo, but there was more that appealed to them. “The woman who owned the house had raised three sons there, and she adored the house,” says the wife. “That vibe was there.”

The couple enlisted Eubanks Group Architects to help clarify the floor plan, but Greer Hartmann guided the rest of the renovation of the four-bedroom home. “We stuccoed the brick and painted it white, and changed out the old windows,” the designer says. Other oddities in the layout—such as a view from the entry straight up to the second-floor bathroom—were tackled by the filmmaker’s husband. “My husband has a good sense about how to solve that kind of problem,” she says. He also displayed a flair for the dramatic, dreaming up the glass ceiling over the informal dining room. Light from a pendant hanging far above in the attic space filters down into the airy room to make a warm, diffuse ambiance.

The kitchen was gutted and square footage was nabbed from an adjacent utility room for a pantry and dish room. The extra storage is a great idea, of course, but the room is notable for another reason—it’s pink. In fact, open any cabinet in the otherwise gray-hued kitchen, and you’ll find that the interiors are also rosy pink. The filmmaker explains: “Pink is the best color—everybody looks good in pink.” Greer Hartmann employed the color with both discretion and abandon. There are touches of it in the floral upholstery used in a reading room, as well as in a bathroom’s bird-patterned wallpaper. The walls and ceiling in the entry blush with the color, endowing the white living room next to it with a come-hither glow. Any suggestion that the color is too dainty is decidedly offset by the dramatic black staircase leading upward. Two velvet eggplant sofas continue the bold theme, but Greer Hartmann veers away from sensory overload by accompanying the seating arrangement in the pared-down room with a rustic wood coffee table.

Neither the designer nor the homeowners relied on their preference for pink as an excuse to avoid other bold moves. “I’ve always wanted a black dining room too,” the wife says. Greer Hartmann accommodated her with a handpainted black silk wallpaper; the room’s





The kitchen is a calming arena for cooking and gathering, painted with Benjamin Moore's Balboa Mist, a subtle gray. But all is not what it seems in this space: The dish room glows pink thanks to Benjamin Moore's Pale Berry, which is also the shade the homeowner painted the interiors of her kitchen cabinets.





ceiling is painted black and underfoot is a black embossed cowhide rug. A sunroom is cloaked in gold leaf wallpaper. The process of decoration fascinated the designer as much as it entertained her clients. “It kept me thinking,” she says. “You don’t often see a heavily decorated modern house.”

As for the clients, the wife is amazed too. “We are astounded [by] the house,” she says. “We didn’t take our other house this far—we always liked clean lines.” But the couple felt that the house was asking for another chance. “If you are lucky enough to bring a house back to life,” the wife says, “you can really have an adventure.” The decoration, both the designer and clients believe, was an expression of something innate in the home: “It’s full of joy,” says the wife, “and that joy was already in the house when we bought it.” ■

From left: Papered with a black-on-gold leaf wallcovering, the sunroom—which features polished brass Lawson-Fenning lounge chairs upholstered in Jim Thompson’s Baxan in Smokey Plum—is further dramatized by ebony-stained wide-plank European oak floors; Serena & Lily’s Everett wall sconces flank Restoration Hardware’s slipcovered Bedford bed in the master bedroom.

## DESIGN DETAILS

### TYPE

Single-family home

### LOCATION

Houston

### ARCHITECTS OF RECORD

Eubanks Group Architects  
eubanks-architects.com

### CONTRACTOR

Urban Craft Custom Homes  
urbancraft.org

### INTERIOR DESIGNER

Jennifer Greer Hartmann  
Greer Interior Design  
greerinteriordesign.com

## RESOURCES

### A. RUDIN

Sofa in living room  
arudin.com

### APPARATUS

Trapeze 6 pendant in kitchen  
apparatusstudio.com

### ARTERIOS

Winchester side tables in living room  
arterioshome.com

### FROMENTAL

Wallpaper in dining room  
fromental.co.uk

### GLOBAL VIEWS

Pendant in dining room  
globalviews.com

### LAWSON-FENNING

Elysian counter stools in kitchen,  
lounge chairs in sunroom  
lawsonfenning.com

### PHILLIP JEFFRIES

Black and gold leaf  
wallpaper in sunroom  
phillipjeffries.com

### RESTORATION HARDWARE

Cowhide rug in dining room, dining  
table in room with glass ceiling, bed  
and nightstands in master bedroom  
restorationhardware.com

### SHIIR

Passage rug in living room  
shiirugs.com