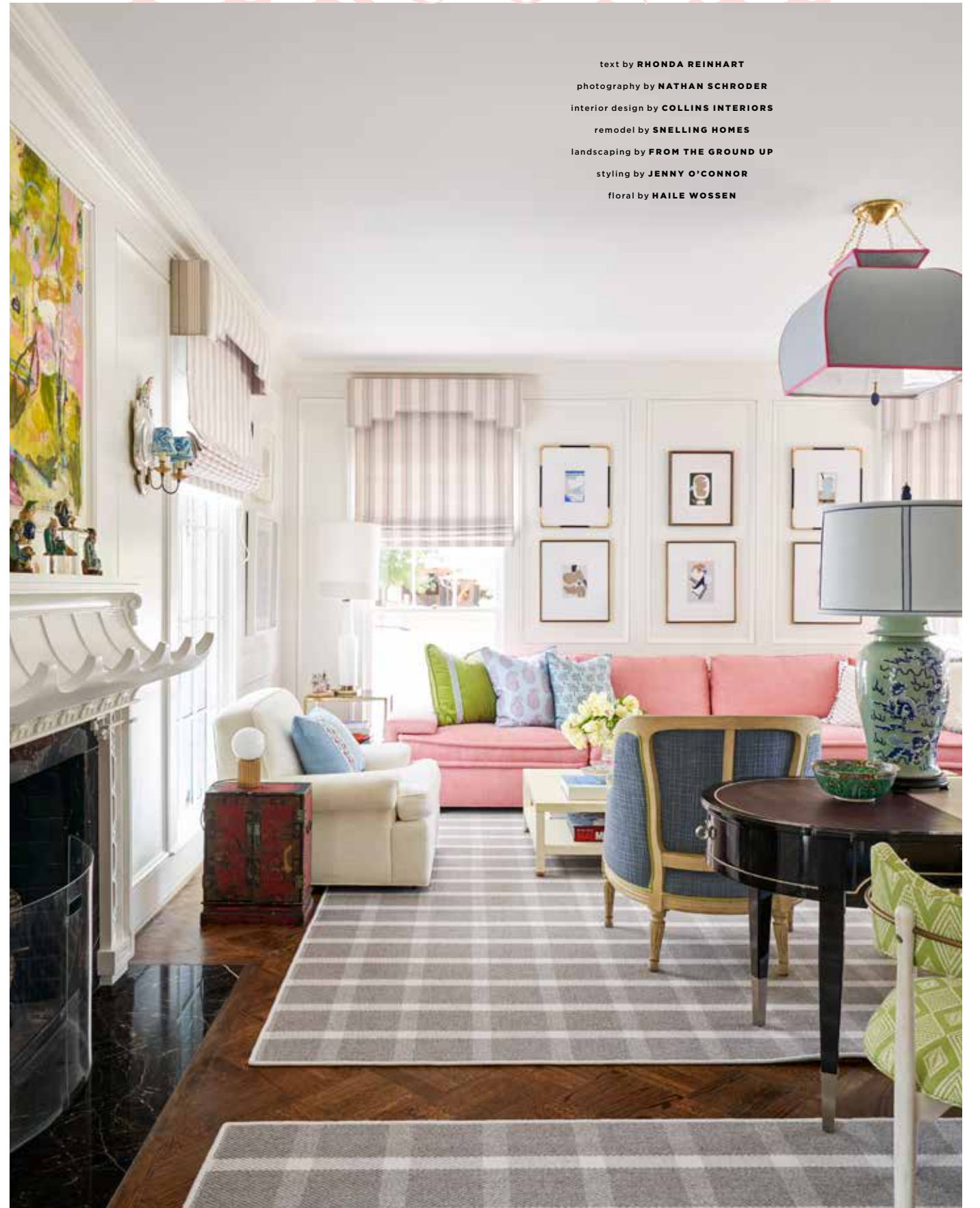




DESIGNER **CYNTHIA COLLINS** LOOSENED THE DESIGN REINS AND EMBRACED HER FEMININE SIDE WHEN CREATING A DREAM HOME FOR HER LATEST CLIENT: HERSELF.

PERSONAL



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floral by **HAILE WOSSEN**

PREFERENCE



F

opening spread (from left): Interior designer Cynthia Collins walks with her dog, Murphy, who sadly passed away just before this issue went to press. Collins created two distinct sitting areas in her living room, which she further defined with matching Stark rugs. Of the custom mantel by Casci Plaster, she says, "It's super wild. It's something that would probably be a hard sell to a client, but for me, I wanted something really whimsical."

this spread (from left): Collins left the Louisiana-style architecture of the house's exterior as is but added a pickled finish to the formerly pink brick. Collins created the bar area in the entry from a former coat closet and, as an "experiment," covered the cabinet in wallpaper. "It's holding up well!" she reports. The designer finished the entry space with an antique Biedermeier chest from Blue Print Store, a custom settee upholstered in fabric by Pierre Frey, and a light fixture from Charles Edwards.

For Cynthia Collins, founder of the 35-year-old design firm Collins Interiors, creating sophisticated residences for Dallas' discerning homeowners is serious business. But when it came to designing her own home—a 1940s traditional she bought

from longtime friends and neighbors in 2019—Collins loosened the reins and let playfulness take over.

No matter where you look in the designer's color-splashed University Park abode, your eyes meet with a visual treat—from the exterior's decorative wooden gates and antique brick walkways to the interior's fanciful Chinoiserie-inspired fireplace and whimsical walls dressed in floor-to-ceiling florals. "Personally, I like a lot of layering of colors and patterns," Collins says. "I can be a little bit less serious than I can with a client."

Adding to the fun, the project marked the first time in 20 years that Collins had embarked on a to-the-studs remodel of her own, this time working with contractor Clay Snelling of Snelling Homes. "That was fun for me," Collins says, "because I do that for everybody else, but I don't do it for myself."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 41 >>





this page: A custom sectional provides comfy seating in the living room, where the decidedly cheerful vibe comes courtesy of the colorful art and accessories. "Since we don't have a den, I wanted to make the room feel more casual," Collins says, "not like a formal living area." The centerpiece of the gallery wall is a Karen Smidth painting from Blue Print Gallery. **opposite page:** Natural light fills Collins' kitchen thanks to the multiple windows she added to the space. She brightened the room even more by incorporating shades of blue and purple with a La Cornue range, Ann Sacks tile, leather cushions on vintage counter stools, and Peter Dunham fabric for the window treatments. The light fixture is from The Urban Electric Co.



CHARM SCHOOL

Cynthia Collins' time-tested tips for a charm-filled home.

1

SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF

Collins never skimps on trims or upholstery details, the oft-overlooked features that can add big personality to a space. "The feet, the cords, the tapes, the wood finishes, the frame shapes, the cushion styles—all these elements play into the overall look and feel of how a space will live," the designer says.

2

PASS THE SMELL TEST

Because she cooks dinner from scratch every evening, using fresh herbs from her cutting garden, Collins' kitchen is often filled with a delightful aroma. "Flavorful meals in the oven set the tone for a smell-good entrance," she says.

3

GO THE EXTRA-FESTIVE MILE WHEN ENTERTAINING

Collins likes to greet her guests with a signature cocktail—served, of course, in a fabulous glass. Her latest go-to concoction: muddled cucumber, mint, vodka, and fresh lime served shaken and ice cold.

» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 36

One of the couple's most transformative decisions was removing a large circle driveway so they could turn the home's front yard into a cozy courtyard. Enclosed by a low brick wall, the yard essentially acts as an outdoor living room. "The wall is low enough that I can still be friendly, but if I have a cocktail party or have friends over, we can sit in the front yard and we don't feel exposed to the street," Collins says. "Instead of it being a yard you just look at it, it's something we use."

Creating intimate sitting areas was one of the designer's major goals for the interior as well. At about 2,800 square feet, the house was smaller than her family's previous residence, prompting her to "reframe" how the house was lived in. "I wanted to make more rooms and more areas to sit," she says.

To accomplish that goal, Collins separated the large, open living room into two distinct spaces and closed in part of the primary bedroom to create a separate sitting area. She even stuck a sofa and swivel chair in the kitchen, making a casual spot for cocktails or a light meal. The designer also added a screened porch and transformed a small space in the backyard into an outdoor dining area.

Collins' design choices weren't all about functionality, however. As the mother of three sons who had all moved out of the house, the designer found herself armed with a newfound freedom to embrace her girly side. Her feminine touch is most obvious in the home's two guest rooms, one of which is a veritable sea of pink—from a canopy bed and custom chaise lounge to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44 »

opposite page: In the dining room, Collins paired a 1940s dining table with antique English chairs. "They don't really go together, but that's way more fun," she says. **this page (from left):** In a small office off the primary bedroom, Collins continued Phillip Jeffries grasscloth from the walls onto the ceiling, manipulating the simple stripes to converge at the Urban Electric Co. light fixture. A block-printed wallcovering by George Spencer Designs is a pretty-in-blue backdrop for an antique demilune table in the dining room.



Once part of the primary bedroom, Collins closed off this space to create a cozy sitting area. The fabric on the custom sectional is by Brunschwig & Fils, and the light fixture is from The Urban Electric Co., augmented with a custom shade.



this page (clockwise from top left): A custom vanity chair in fabric by Isobel complements the pink walls in this guest bath. The brass-knobbed, etched-glass door behind it leads to the shower. Placing the bed in front of built-in bookshelves was a space-saving measure in the primary bedroom. Collins upholstered the custom bed in fabric by Brunschwig & Fils and dressed it in custom linens by Leontine Linens. Collins wrapped this guest room in a floral wallcovering by Schumacher and had custom shades made to match. She added three twin beds to sleep as many people as possible, hanging vintage pencil drawings from England above each headboard.



**this page
(from top):**
The home's charming courtyards and decorative gates were inspired by a trip to Charleston. "We spent a lot of time walking up and down streets and studying the architecture," Collins says. The landscaping is by From the Ground Up. Ever the hostess, Collins transformed a small area in the backyard into an outdoor dining room and paved it in antique bricks.

opposite page:
Collins outfitted the screened porch with furnishings from Blue Print Store and artwork by Marise Maas.



>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 41

linen-covered walls and matching window treatments. For the other bedroom, which was formerly a study, Collins traded dark brown bookshelves for a trio of twin beds and wrapped the space in a ladylike floral wallcovering. "It was the perfect opportunity to put flowers all over the walls since I've been doing boys stuff my whole life!" she says.

As an entertaining space, though, the Collins house appeals to all comers, evidenced by the home's steady stream of guests. "This house is smaller, but we've had way more people and more functions here," Collins says, noting her and her husband's no-need-to-knock mindset. That warm and welcoming attitude, combined with the home's personality-packed interiors and party-ready front yard, ensures visitors will be vying for invites for years to come. **D**

