

glamour and

After years of longing to live in the Hollywood Heights district of Dallas, an interior designer renovates a historic cottage for the long haul.

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Emily Johnston Larkin's living room design reflects her talent for blending old and new. Original sconces flanking the fireplace and a niche above the mantel—right-sized for a small pendulum clock—were preserved for architectural interest. Blush pink accents throughout reference and refine the home's original mauve color scheme.

grace



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Ask a self-proclaimed “homebody” about the necessities for a home, and they’ll likely mention a few things: cushy furniture, soft colors, and a little piece of territory where each individual can curl up for a good long nap. Interior designer Emily Johnston Larkin is one such homebody—though she knows that to accommodate her husband, Ben, their terrier, Zoe, and herself, she needn’t sacrifice style for comfort. “I love a formal living room,” Emily says. “A lot of people think they’re a waste of space, but I actually spend a lot of time in mine, reading and watching my shows. That’s my ‘woman cave’—it’s where Zoe and I can just curl up on the sofa. As pretty as it is, we use it a lot.”

The blush pink of the living room chairs is an ode to the home’s beginnings. “Originally, the interior was all painted a mauve pink,” Emily says. “When we first walked in, we could barely see straight.” Nevertheless, the home’s charming 1933 English Tudor exterior—perfectly preserved under Hollywood Heights conservation district codes—and its interior architectural allure were enough to help Emily see past the visual clutter. Better yet, the conservation rules allowed her nearly full reign over the home’s interior design.

After wiping out all the mauve and painting everything—including stained wood baseboards—a clean white, Emily began reconfiguring the interior structure to better suit her family’s needs. Two adjacent rooms on the first floor featured round dining tables—what Emily calls “the restaurant

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"I'M A FIRM BELIEVER IN DESIGNING FOR YOU, NOT THE NEXT OWNER."

—homeowner and designer Emily Johnston Larkin



Top left: Ben designed and landscaped the entire backyard himself. He took dead space on the side of the house and created a “secret garden,” complete with a flagstone path, hanging ferns, and exotic flowers.

Top right: A vintage zebrawood armoire hides a television and is flanked by framed love letters that Emily’s grandmother wrote to her grandfather while he was in the Army. *Above left:* A second dining room was unnecessary, so Emily turned it into a study. *Above middle:* The architectural charm of Hollywood Heights drew Emily and Ben to the neighborhood. Their own cottage is a 1933 English Tudor. *Above right:* The cabinets, walls, and trim in the kitchen were all painted the same overpowering mauve pink, so Emily whitewashed everything, reinserting a little color by painting the mudroom’s refurbished vintage cabinet coral. Original 1930s tile was preserved in the backsplash for retro flair.

Opposite: A simple round marble table and ghost chairs give the dining room a modern edge.





setup”—so she replaced one table with a desk, turning the room into Ben's study. Upstairs, she transformed a former guest bedroom into a master suite by closing up part of the hallway to expand the master bath. Some historic elements—a telephone niche in the downstairs hall, the fireplace, and turquoise tiling in the guest bath—were preserved to strike the delicate balance between Emily's love of old and new. “I wanted to keep with the original integrity of the home,” Emily says. “I didn't want anything to go so modern that it wouldn't go well with the rest of the house, but I also wanted to give each room my own spin and make it fresh, new, and inviting.”

Just like her decision to start her own design firm only a year after graduating college, Emily's decorating choices are confident and bold. Her favorite selection is right inside the fire-engine red door—a teal lotus-print wallpaper that covers the entry foyer. It greets guests with colorful personality, elegance, and a resounding sense that, like its owners, it too is here to stay. □

Above left: Touches of glamour, such as a gold-and-white vintage vanity table and soft seafoam drapes, add romance to the master bedroom. *Above right:* Emily had vintage nightstands repainted white and gold to complement the vanity table. *Left:* The master bath was formed by merging the former guest bath, guest closets, and part of the upstairs hallway. *Opposite:* A seagrass rug, linen headboard, and pops of blue create a neutral oasis in the guest bedroom. Mirrored nightstands and a gilded sunburst mirror lend some sparkle to the otherwise organic color scheme.

