



# A Personal Canvas

A DALLAS, TEXAS, DESIGNER PUTS HER DISTINCTIVE MARK ON HER HISTORIC COTTAGE, PRESERVING ITS CLASSIC ARCHITECTURAL ALLURE WHILE INFUSING THE INTERIORS WITH A MIX OF STYLES ALL HER OWN.



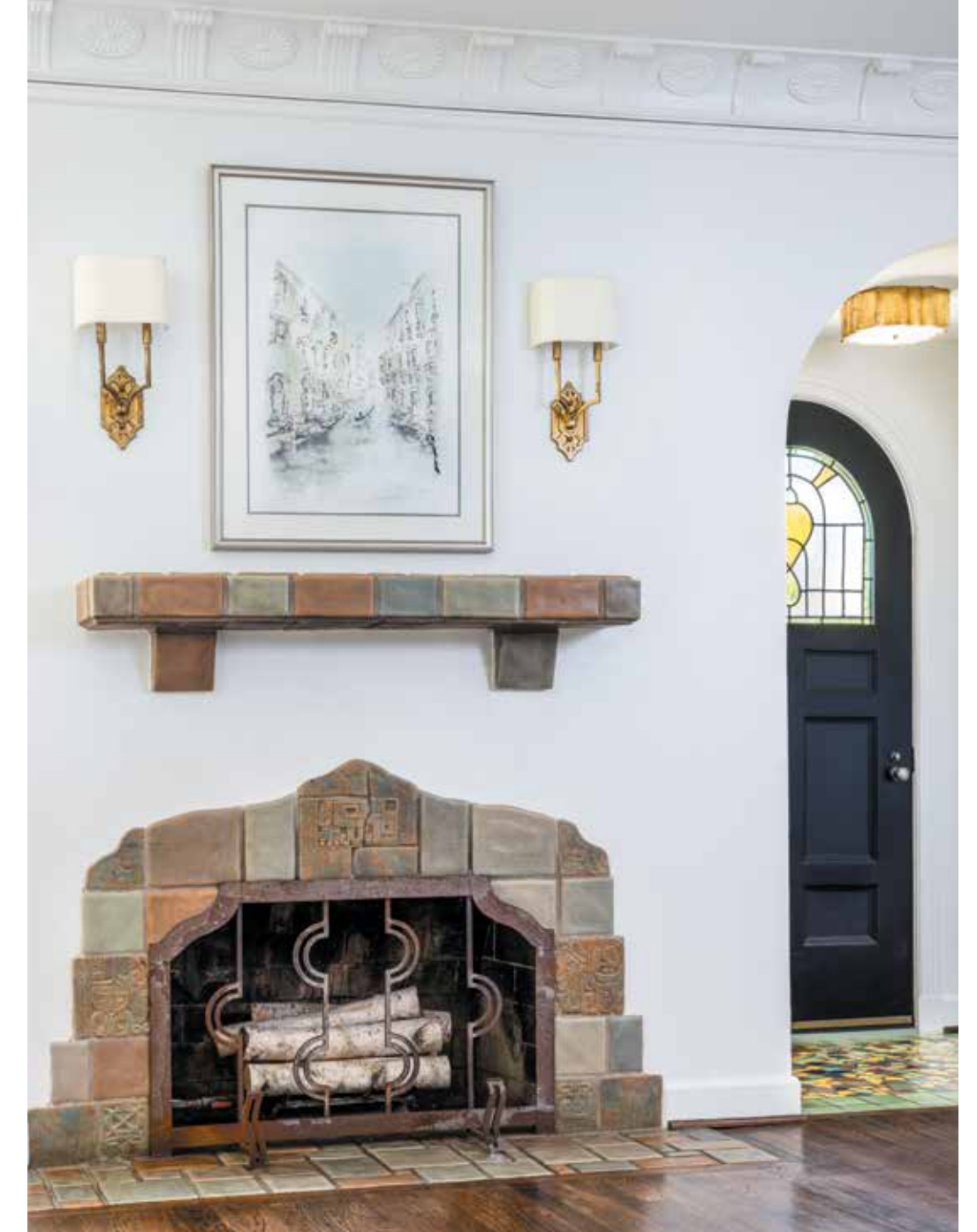


When Emily Johnston Larkin of EJ Interiors discovered her 1926 English Tudor-style cottage in the historic Lakewood neighborhood of

Dallas, Texas, the curb appeal was undeniable. Built by Dines & Kraft Building Company, notable developers of the early 1900s, the home's striking rooflines, picturesque brick and stonework, and expansive stained-glass bay windows imbue instant enchantment. And though the interior was filled with equally impressive architectural character, Emily and her husband, Ben, immediately began plans for a multiphase renovation that would preserve its original charm while creating a functional space for their growing family—as well as a beautiful backdrop for Emily's dynamic style.

"We bought the home in 2018 knowing we would need more space and then moved out for an extensive yearlong overhaul in 2019," Emily says. "The home works for us because the front still has the original formal spaces, which we wanted to preserve, and then the renovated rooms at the back encompass modern-day living with an open kitchen and family room concept. My vision was to stay true to the architectural style of the home. I didn't want our addition to be an obvious one and wanted it to flow seamlessly with what was built in the 1920s."

Opposite: The home's stunning showcase of historic architectural features begins with distinction in the entryway, where designer Emily Johnston Larkin enriched original elements like "Morning Tile" and stained glass with a framed vintage Gracie wallpaper panel as well as personal pieces like love letters that her grandmother wrote to her grandfather.



They worked to perfect the new floor plan with construction designer Carol Gantt of Gantt Design, who specializes in the renovations of historic Lakewood homes, updating the kitchen, family room, and primary and powder bathrooms while also building out the attic space to create another bedroom with an en suite bath, a nursery, and a playroom. With the additions, they made sure to incorporate architectural repetition, mimicking structural elements like the original arched doorways.

Emily says what makes this home so unique at the foundational level is how many of its original features remain intact, from the 1920s “Morning Tile” that greets you in the entryway, harmonizing with the Rookwood Pottery fireplace and mantel tiling just beyond, to the ornate plaster molding that makes its way around the formal living area and into the dining room.

“We even removed all of the molding in my living room when we took out the ceilings and then reinstalled it at the end of the project,” Emily says. “Keeping the historic aspects of the home was really important to us—no matter what lengths we had to go to preserve it.” She then contrasted these elaborate original embellishments like the crown molding and stained glass with more transitional furnishings, such as a sofa with track arms and a waterfall skirt and contemporary wing chairs.

“I didn’t want my home to feel stuffy and too traditional, so the addition of more modernized pieces gives it some tension and balance,” Emily says. “I used classic materials that gave a nod to the Tudor style of the home with a hint of Art Deco. My house is very much a traditional cottage, but with updated details to keep it looking young and fresh. I love a sense of history and only like to incorporate art that is meaningful,” she says of pieces like the framed love letters penned by her grandparents that grace the living room alongside abstract works. “I really strive to achieve a juxtaposition of old and new.”





When it came to color, Emily utilized Benjamin Moore's White Dove as a base and enlivened it with plenty of soft notes of pastel, as well as vibrant artwork, fun fabrics, and even a few bold wall coverings. "I consider blue a neutral, so I used blue in almost every room," she says, referencing a specific icy shade she chose. "I carried this hue throughout for some consistency, but I didn't want a blue-and-white house, so in each room, I have accent colors to break up the monotony and add contrast."

The dining room and kitchen tout the most dedicated blue-and-white schemes, but with a juxtaposed approach. The more saturated dining room bears a vintage Schumacher wallpaper that feels at once whimsical and classic as it coalesces with collected china and chinoiserie, while the kitchen employs a crisp white aesthetic with coordinating accents across the blue-green spectrum.



Emily carried the dining room's Schumacher wallpaper into the stairwell that the space opens up to. An original archway connects the dining room to the living room, and an indistinguishable replica crafted during the renovation graces the opening that adjoins the kitchen.

"I think white is so classic in a kitchen, and I didn't want to do anything too trendy in here in terms of paints or stain," Emily says. She enlivened the blank slate with a blue-and-white Roman shade, celadon-green lantern pendant lights, and a few curated accents spanning artwork and ceramics.





The upstairs additions continue the calming pastel palette, from Emily's recurring ice blue on the guest room walls to a pink floral paper in the nursery paired with sentimental art, such as a portrait of Emily's grandmother. These former attic spaces highlight their original rooflines and previously hidden architectural features like stained-glass windows above the bathroom's claw-foot tub, achieving distinctive character and cozy charm.

Emily's personality shines throughout the home's timeless foundation

with thoughtful details tucked into every corner—details the designer says are always evolving. "Making decisions for your own home is much more difficult than working on a client's home," Emily says. "I see so many beautiful things on a daily basis that it becomes hard to commit to a fabric or wallpaper, and I strive to never use the same material twice to make each project one of a kind. I consider my house my laboratory where I can experiment with new ideas, but that also gets me into trouble as things are always changing around here."



The nursery makes the most of the quirky rooflines that resulted from its attic-space origins, using them to create cozy nooks for a crib and a rocker. The renovation team knocked out a stone element on the exterior façade to construct the porthole window above the crib. "I put an antique sunburst mirror around it that happened to fit perfectly," Emily says. Continuing the thread of meaningful artwork woven throughout the abode, a sketch of Emily's grandmother who modeled for Neiman Marcus in the 1950s keeps company with an abstract of Lake Como, a family-favorite travel destination—as well as the room's contribution to the home's recurrent ice-blue hue.

