



# Art and Style in Santa Fe

By JULIE CATALANO  
Photography by © PHOTO DOMINIQUE VORILLON

When Austin homeowners decided to open a business in Santa Fe, they began looking for a home where they could seamlessly ease into their new surroundings in the Land of Enchantment. They turned to their go-to Austin designer, Vickee Byrum of Yellow Door Design, to help them with this latest project. By combining an impeccable sense of style with practical needs for entertaining and an appreciation for local art, the results are, well, enchanting.

Thankfully, the previous owners had completed a “painstaking renovation” on the nearly 3,000-square foot structure in the East Side Historic District, says Byrum, so all that was left to do was fill the house with what the enterprising couple needed to create the perfect haven for house guests. “This is their first home in the area,” says Byrum, “so we bought all new furnishings.” That happy task was accomplished in a mere three-day “shopping and scouting binge” in Dallas. “My goal was to introduce a sophisticated comfort through the use of a variety of fabrics, textures and materials. I also wanted the home to have an airy California feel as the husband had lived in Los Angeles for many years.” Done and done. The masterfully crafted all-brick flooring, the luminescence of Venetian plaster walls, punctuated by pine ceilings with cedar beams — all provided the perfect canvas for nontraditional neutrals and selected custom furnishings.





“Santa Fe style can be very overwhelming where everything has kind of a heavy feel,” explains Byrum. “We wanted to get away from brown and tan and peach and lighten things up.”

It worked. “You could easily take out every piece here and put it in a contemporary California home and it would not look out of place at all.” Lightening up the nonstop brick involved the artful use of rugs by Stark® “that wouldn’t compete with the floor. I didn’t want these super-busy rugs where you wouldn’t pay attention to the brick.” The runner in the study is custom by Kyle Bunting in Mr. Crowley Herringbone.

They also made expert use of the outdoors, with French doors in the living room, dining room, reading room and master bedroom that open up to the beautifully landscaped interior courtyard, bringing in endless streams of natural light that

help to create the illusion of spaciousness. “The rooms aren’t that big,” says Byrum, “but we were able to make the house ‘live big’ by using every single inch of the space.” That, she says, is how one of her favorite features of the house came to be. “What was once a closet for a printer, computer and files is now a bar. We removed the closet interiors and installed Ralph Lauren Shantou Metallic Weave wallpaper in Pearl.”

The bar is notable for another reason: It features the first work of art that the couple bought for their new home. Entitled *Acequia, Morning Shadows* by Margi Lucena, it was a perfect choice considering that the actual Acequia Madre runs alongside the house.

Byrum admits she clutched a bit when she first learned that the homeowners wanted to adorn the house exclusively with

art from New Mexico. She needn’t have worried. “I have loved every single piece that they bought.” A favorite painting is *Ever Unto Then Ever* (2013-2016), by McKay Otto in the master bedroom. The colorful *Untitled* (1928) painting by Dorothy Brett adds a punch of color to the soothing living room; in perfect contrast, there’s *Black Bear with Magpie* (2004), charcoal on paper, by Susan Brearey.

At the mention of the living room, Byrum describes the challenge to “create seating areas that made sense” in the 25-foot round space, which she saw for the first time with the previous owners furnishings. “I took everything out and put it all back, rearranging it four or five times, and finally landed on the right layout.” What she didn’t want, she says, “was the roundness of the room to be the talking point.”







By squaring the circular space using careful placement of a Stark wool rug in Platinum, custom Kisabeth sofa with a Clarence House fabric, and two swivel chairs by Baker Furniture®, “we created seating areas that had symmetry and were logical.” The room also features a Mimi London Fusion Lounge Chair which — like the two Baker pieces — swivels to allow for conversation or television viewing. It’s also the ideal spot for the musically talented husband. “I wanted him to have that central chair where he would be in his own space and be super comfortable whether he was working on his computer or playing the guitar. It’s an incredible chair.”

More incredible chairs are found in the dining room, surrounding a custom table in reclaimed fir built by Peterson Antiques in Los Angeles over a Stark rug in Platinum. The chairs are from Hollywood at Home, re-editions of a chair bought at a Hollywood memorabilia auction and attributed to architect and furniture designer T. H. Robsjohn-Gibbings. The original was made famous in the 1953 film *How to Marry a Millionaire*. “They are as comfortable as they are beautiful,” asserts Byrum.



Comfort and beauty extend to the two guest rooms — one in cream with custom twin upholstered beds and one in muted lavender with a custom queen upholstered bed with nail heads — always ready for the couple’s four adult children and their many friends and business colleagues from around the country. “We paid extra care to ensure every piece we added was not only intentional but would make every guest feel completely comfortable,” says Byrum. Maybe too comfortable. “I recently spent a week at the house before this photo shoot, and I am telling the truth when I say I didn’t leave the house for 48 hours when I first arrived.”

Byrum is understandably proud of the project, but attributes much of its success to “dream clients” who know what they want. “We talk about the vision and they let me execute it, allowing me to design what I see as an environment for the best versions of themselves.” ❖

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