



Well-Connected

Interior designer Paloma Contreras ties together formal, feminine, modern, and minimal to create luxe livable spaces for a young family of four.

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Previous pages: A graphic Greek key design heightens visual interest on a tone-on-tone wing chair. The fretwork motif on the buffet remains in keeping with the dining room's alfresco ambiance. Opposite, top right: In the entry, a vibrant abstract painting hangs above a whitewashed commode flanked by a pair of Louis XVI-style chairs and gilded convex mirrors. The vignette's symmetrical styling brings order to the large, lofty space. Opposite and this page: "I love the clever seating plan in the formal living room," says Contreras. "The double-sided sofas create intimate conversation zones and give the once cavernous space a cozy and inviting feeling."



Paloma Contreras takes her work seriously. But not too seriously. The teacher-turned-blogger-turned-interior designer's playful but practical approach to decorating, coupled with her luxe yet livable aesthetic, has made her the go-to girl for design-savvy clients of all ages, but especially for young families like the Longs.

Having relocated to Houston from a small West Texas town with their two daughters under 10, Lauren and Jason Long were drawn to the close-knit community of Memorial and found a place to call home in the family-friendly neighborhood of Piney Point Village. Although it was a new build, it wasn't quite turnkey, as it lacked the warmth and bespoke quality that the Longs were hoping for. Enter Contreras.

"It was a blank slate when they bought it," says Contreras of the 8,400-square-foot home. "We slightly modified some of the architectural features, updated the lighting, added wallpaper, and brought in all-new furnishings. Lauren and I share a love for feminine, timeless interiors, so our synergy made it great fun to work together. She and her husband, Jason, appreciate the value of good quality and craftsmanship, so we took our time to thoughtfully compose classic, beautiful



“THIS HOME EXUDES SOUTHERN STYLE BECAUSE IT’S BEAUTIFUL, GRACIOUS, AND TRULY MEANT TO BE ENJOYED!”

—PALOMA CONTRERAS, INTERIOR DESIGNER

Opposite: Traditionalists at heart, the homeowners wanted a true formal dining room designed for elegant entertaining. A contemporary crystal chandelier and antique Rococo gilt mirror shimmer against the backdrop of the botanical wallcovering, while a mix of sculptural side chairs and skirted armchairs in neutral hues soften the straight lines of the richly-stained dining table. Below: A banquette in the dining room is the perfect perch for an after-dinner cocktail.



spaces by balancing traditional silhouettes and fabrics with modern elements.”

Throughout the house, crystal chandeliers, gilt mirrors, and skirted seating in decadent fabrics up the ante on the elegance factor along with refined wallcoverings in chinoiserie and botanical motifs. To keep the more formal decor from reading too rigid, Contreras peppered the place with fuss-free appointments, such as abstract art, sisal and wool broadloom rugs, and painted and rattan pieces. For the hub of the house—the kitchen and adjoining family room—she sourced hard-working furniture in durable finishes and used laminated and all-weather-grade fabrics for seating, so that it’s low in maintenance but high in style. Adding to the contemporary comfort are overscale accents like wing chairs and dining chairs with tall, sculptural backs; upholstered headboards that soar toward the ceiling; urn and gourd lamps with broad shades and bulbous bases; and extra-large art installations. Thanks to the exaggerated forms, spacious rooms are filled with charisma rather than clutter. Rooms wrapped with soft white walls (with a few intermittent pastel pinks and blues) also help combat visual chaos by allowing each one to work synergistically with the next.

“It is all about creating a cohesive color story,” says Contreras. “While each room should be able to stand on its own, it is important to have a thread that ties all of them together. I think the eye needs a place to rest, so it’s important to use pattern wisely. Although I appreciate maximalist spaces, I often get overwhelmed with a riot of prints and colors, so I use them more intently and judiciously. I believe the end result makes a much greater impact.”



Opposite, top: The generously-sized island is ideal for cooking and dining while also serving as a visual divider between the kitchen and family room. Opposite, left: For family-friendly seating around the breakfast table, Contreras paired a custom banquette with a set of vintage rattan chairs. This page: By enlisting the same palette of blue, white, gray, and gold, Contreras blurred the line between the family room and kitchen.



The starting point for the master bedroom's pale pink palette was the pair of custom chinoiserie panels that flank the Veere Grenney upholstered headboard. A handsome pewterfinished soaking tub makes a dramatic focal point in the master bathroom.

