

This Houston home was both years in the making and decorated in just six weeks. Originally conceived by residential designer Ryan Gordon and executed by builder Brian Thompson, the residence was purchased during construction. To put their personal stamp on the interiors, the owners looked to designer Benjamin Johnston. "It was about softening the home and warming it up," he recalls. "For example, we introduced all the curves that you see throughout the house and the wood on the ceilings."

However, the final vision was not meant to be: The clients got called to Europe for work before Johnston could furnish the dwelling. Two years passed under another owner before the house was back on the market again. A young family relocating to Houston liked what they saw and asked their broker if they knew who had designed it. The broker happily connected them to Johnston, but there was one hitch: The family wanted to move in, in six weeks, and they were bringing nothing with them.

"If any part of the constellation of circumstances had been different, there would've been no way we could've done this," reflects Johnston, who collaborated with his director of interiors, Paola Neri, on the project. "But we knew every single material in the home, we had all the architectural drawings, and we'd already done furniture space planning for the previous homeowners." To make the six-week time frame work, however, the designer needed one more thing: His clients' complete trust. "The confidence that they placed in us was essential to delivering on this tall order," he says.

Once Johnston was on board, it was all hands on deck. On day one, he had landscapers refreshing the exteriors and contractors

measuring every room and window. Johnston also called on Thompson to come back and give new life to elements that had become worn or damaged over time.

With the reinvigoration of the home's bones in motion, Johnston and his team of designers turned their attention to the furnishings. "We needed to comb every resource that we had in Houston, broader Texas and across the country," he remembers. Given the time restriction, custom pieces were limited to window coverings and stair runners. In addition, they looked for existing upholstered pieces on showroom floors that could be re-covered in a hurry in the client's preferred palette of warm, modern neutrals. "In several rooms, we shopped rugs and art first because we knew they'd provide color, and we'd need to build around them," the designer explains. For instance, an antique runner in the kitchen inspired bursts of rust and gold in the accessories.

For art, Johnston again turned to trusted partners at local galleries. He was looking for pieces that would fit with his clients' preference for things that were neither too modern nor too traditional and that reflected an active family. "Scale was a critical element in the success of the art curation for this house," he adds.

Walking through the finished abode, any visitor would be hard pressed to notice anything that seemed rushed about the decor—a testament to the power of Johnston's interior architectural detailing. "For all of the adrenaline and the stress of getting it done, it was also joyful and gratifying, especially when the homeowners stepped inside," the designer says. "They were excited to make Houston their home." □

Architecture: Ryan Gordon, Gordon Partners Design
Interior Design: Benjamin Johnston, Benjamin Johnston Design
Home Builder: Brian Thompson, Thompson Custom Homes

Lighting the Way

AFTER DESIGNING THE INTERIORS, BENJAMIN JOHNSTON FURNISHED THIS HOUSTON ABOBE IN RECORD TIME.

WRITTEN BY LAURA FENTON | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JULIE SOEFER | STYLING BY JESSICA HOLTAM

In the dramatic double-height entry, a travertine table from RH and woven Surya ottomans rest atop a Feizy rug. A painting by Meredith Pardue was sourced through Laura Rathe Fine Art, while the prints below hail from Soicher Marin.





Above: A mirror-backed bar creates a glamorous vignette in the party room. The Larose Guyon light fixture cuts a striking silhouette over the marble from Pomogranit-ADR, which is surrounded by brass stools from Interlude Home.

Opposite: Enveloped in tinted plaster and illuminated by Apparatus' Cloud chandelier and an Articolo Studios sconce, the dining room features a Four Hands table, leather seats from Hickory Chair and skirted chairs from Baker, grounded by a Madison Lily rug. Artwork by Scotty Peek pops above the fireplace.



Several styles of stone lend the family room visual depth, seen in the Four Hands coffee table as well as the side table and Enoki Natural Dome lamp, both from CB2. Adjacent to a Visual Comfort & Co. lamp, the large artwork is by Don Morris, purchased through Laura Rathe Fine Art.



The kitchen's waterfall island is clad in a richly veined quartzite sourced through Pomogranit-ADR and joined by stools from Interlude Home. A Waterstone faucet and pendants from RH add shine to the room. All the appliances are by Gaggenau.



Above: Cool, subtle elegance defines the guest bathroom, where a barrel-vaulted shower is lined in glazed ceramic tilework by Buena Vista Tile with Newport Brass hardware. Florim stone flooring runs underfoot, and the marble countertops are from Pomogranit-ADR.

Opposite: A shell chandelier from Hudson Valley Lighting Group and warm wood on the ceiling elevate the primary bedroom's neutral palette. Luke Diiorio work from Dimmitt Contemporary Art appears above the Bernhardt bed, which is anchored by a floor covering from Matt Camron Rugs & Tapestries and flanked by window treatments from D&D Drapery Co.





The pool sits in the courtyard, adorned with decorative orbs from CB2. Lanterns from Flambeaux Gas & Electric Lights and Corten steel accents enliven the exterior of the stucco home. A woven Bernhardt outdoor sofa is from Ladco Design Center.