

# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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## Designing with Color

**EXCLUSIVE**

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# FULL

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# SPECTRUM

Given carte blanche by a Houston couple, interior designer Miles Redd realizes a Technicolor dream of high-spirited hues and whirlwind patterns



In the living room of a family's Houston home renovated by Eubanks Group Architects and decorated by Miles Redd, an Agustin Hurtado painting is displayed above a custom-made sofa clad in a Ralph Lauren Home fabric. The 1940s French mosquito sculpture mounted on the ceiling was acquired at Christie's. The club chairs are upholstered in a C&C Milano stripe, a Brunschwig & Fils satin was used for the curtains, an Oscar de la Renta for Lee Jofa satin covers the walls, and the carpeting is by Patterson Flynn Martin. For details see Sources.



**M**ost people have blue moments at one time or another. Interior designer Miles Redd, on the other hand, often feels deliriously yellow. A few years ago, when a prominent Houston couple was considering him as a possible decorator for their 17th-century-French-style mansion in the historic River Oaks neighborhood, the Manhattan-based Redd flew into town for a visit. Standing in their vast entrance hall for the first time, taking in its sober beige walls and echoing proportions, he announced, “I’m feeling taxicab.”

That was the shade of yellow he envisioned for the 36-foot-long space. The wife instantly replied, “I feel the same way—the house is yours.” Thus began an adventure wherein Redd was given creative carte blanche. And why not? The couple had seen Redd’s work in magazines. (“I wanted to jump into the pictures,” the wife remembers.) So they knew that in his energetically embellished rooms color is front and center, noble antiques are leavened by whimsy, and allusions to the past are given a mod spin—perfect settings, they felt, for parties as well as for life with their four-year-old twins.

Redd collaborated with Houston’s Eubanks Group Architects in renovating the 1990s five-bedroom house, then let its ancien régime detailing inspire his fantasies. The decorating, he says, “is sort of a pastiche of all the great European residences I’ve looked at over a lifetime—especially English country houses and the hôtel particuliers of Paris. I’m always trying to take those ideas, those sensibilities, and push them forward into the 21st century.”

The effervescent designer does this not only by dialing up the color palette but also by selecting eye-catching patterns. Take the living room, where walls swathed in lustrous azure satin serve as a backdrop for seating upholstered in a snappy red-and-white linen stripe. In one hallway an Edenic wallpaper (which looks hand-painted but is actually digitally produced) transforms the space into an intoxicating garden of celadon greens, while in the primary family room, another wall covering engenders a Moorish mood by suggesting elaborate tilework. On top of the latter pattern, Redd layered a strongly graphic painting; he also splashed a bold blue ikat print across the room’s four club chairs and added a pair of cocktail tables with tops lacquered in Yves Klein-blue. “In Morocco you would have the tilework but not the

**Above, from left:** The front façade of the 17th-century-French-style house. An Eric Peters painting surveys the entrance hall, where a Stephen Antonson light fixture hangs above a John Rosselli & Assoc. bench.

**Opposite, from top:** An Iksel Decorative Arts wallpaper wraps the primary family room; the infanta painting is by Agustin Hurtado, and the chairs are slipcovered in a Schumacher ikat. Miles Redd lacquered the library’s paneling and installed a chandelier by Robert Kime over a George II drum table found at Sotheby’s and George III-style chairs purchased at Christie’s.







**Above:** The dining room is lined with a Fromental silk wall covering; a Brunschwig & Fils silk taffeta was used for the curtains, the Oscar de la Renta Home for Century Furniture chairs are upholstered in a Turkish velvet, and Agustin Hurtado custom painted the Patterson Flynn Martin sisal. **Opposite, from top:** Hurtado also finished the walls of the ladies' lounge, whose Roman shades are made of a Clarence House stripe; the marquetry bureau plat at left and the Georgian-style secretary bookcase are set up as dressing tables. The kitchen is outfitted with subway tile and a Wolf range.

upholstery," the decorator observes. "But we're in the land of comfort, bells, and whistles. If you can have all that, why wouldn't you want it?"

The former gym is now a ladies' lounge that gets heavy traffic during large parties. The fact that its finely wrought paneling had been painted standard-issue white was, for Redd, a bit like waving a red cloth in front of a bull. Taking inspiration from Mark Rothko's abstract art, the designer obliterated the white beneath kaleidoscopic patches of color trimmed with trompe l'oeil fretwork. And in another family room, often used by the children for breakfast, a green wool felt on the walls conjures an English library vibe, made richer and more complex by a vintage Jansen sofa and an Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann club chair.

The most intense arena is the dining room. With its pale-silver wallpaper painted with exotic foliage, neo-Cubist sisal, peacock-blue taffeta curtains sparked by a John Fowler design, and chairs clad in a black-and-white velvet whose wavy motif vibrates like Op Art,

it's a dynamic space for making a grand sartorial impression. "The great thing about Houston is that people come all decked out," Redd notes. "It's a lot of stylish ladies in stunning clothes, and that works perfectly with the room."

Throughout the process, Redd never forgot that he was in Texas, a place where people and things tend to be larger than life. This helps explain why he was transfixed by a colossal metal mosquito—a French scientific model from the 1940s—and why he brought it to Houston, where he attached it, upside down, to the living room ceiling.

"A big mosquito in an elegant room lets you know these people have a sense of humor," Redd says. "It's also chic. I love insects and the feeling of a cabinet of curiosities. They're usually a tiny bit grotesque, often beautiful, and always unexpected." When he spotted the bug at the Christie's auction of the late antiques dealer Amy Perlin's estate, he e-mailed a photograph of it to the wife, who loved it but argued that it ought to be on a wall. "But of course he won, and of course, he's right," she says with

a laugh. "A fly on the wall would have been too literal."

When the festivities end and the high-octane crowd ebbs, every corner of the house continues to enchant—not least the chromatically compelling bedrooms. The master suite, for example, features a canopy bed with a glossy scarlet top and wool curtains in a matching hue. And the wife takes unflagging delight in her bath, which Redd based on a '30s design by society architect David Adler and his decorator sister, Frances Elkins. (Redd is a major fan of the siblings' oeuvre and years ago installed a vintage Adler/Elkins bath at his own New York City townhouse.) He lined the space with antiqued mirror and acres of figured gray marble—so much of it that the ceiling of the room below had to be reinforced with steel beams. Nervous types might have shied away from such a production, but for Redd, nothing is too much trouble if it's beautiful.

"It's livable glamour, a world's fair of decorating," the wife says with a broad smile. "Around every corner is a surprise. We're still in awe." □



In another family room, a Louis XV-style sofa is upholstered in a Larsen linen, and an Art Deco club chair acquired at Doyle New York is cushioned with the same Turkish velvet used for the throw pillows; the walls are dressed in a Holland & Sherry wool felt, and the sisal is by Patterson Flynn Martin. **Opposite:** At the rear of the house, Vaughan lanterns and an Iksel Decorative Arts wallpaper ornament the gallery.







A vintage Warhol-style Marilyn Monroe lithograph from Todd Alexander Romano overlooks the master bedroom; the curtains are of an Oscar de la Renta for Lee Jofa wool, the wallpaper is by Iksel Decorative Arts, and the sisal is by Patterson Flynn Martin. **Opposite, from top:** Wallpaper by Marthe Armitage animates the ceiling of one child's room, where a William Yeoward for Designers Guild pattern stripes the walls and a Lee Jofa floral was used for the curtains; above the bespoke Fine Arts Furniture beds are framed reproductions of vintage *Vogue* covers from the Condé Nast Collection and Oscar de la Renta Home for Century Furniture pagoda canopies. In the master bath, a mirror from John Rosselli Antiques hangs near an RH towel rack.

