

# WESTERN Interiors

**SPECIAL ISSUE**

## THE GOLD LIST

YOUR **EXCLUSIVE**  
**GUIDE** TO THE  
BEST INTERIOR  
DESIGNERS,  
ARCHITECTS  
AND LANDSCAPE  
DESIGNERS  
WORKING  
IN THE WEST





# Houston Signature

**C. Renea Abbott**  
blends formal  
European notes  
with a fresh  
contemporary  
palette to  
achieve a new  
look for Texas

photography by ROGER DAVIES  
text by AMANDA DAMERON







Designer C. Renea Abbott used comfortable yet refined furniture from Shabby Slips Houston to create a sitting area near a stacked-stone fire surround in the living room of a Houston, Texas, residence. Linen-upholstered sofas flank an iron-base low table with a beveled glass top. The gilded armchair, covered with Rose Tarlow Melrose House blue cotton, is French; the Tibetan wool-and-silk rug is from Creative Flooring Resources.









**opposite** Abbott lent drama to the entry hall by hanging 1960s artworks by Al Held above a Louis XIV gilded settee upholstered with Belgian linen. The wool rug is from Creative Flooring Resources, and the pillow fabric is an eighteenth-century Aubusson remnant. **this page** For a second sitting area in the living room, the designer arranged four club chairs and a low table from Shabby Slips Houston near a Louis XV mahogany armoire.



# I ALWAYS LIKE TO THROW IN A LITTLE BLING, A TEENY BIT OF SPARKLE, TO AN OTHERWISE CLEAN AND CONTEMPORARY SPACE,”

says C. Renea Abbott of a residence she recently completed in Houston, Texas. Easy enough, perhaps, but Abbott had an extra challenge set before her: The clients, a newly married couple, had opposite design sensibilities and had to find a stylish middle ground. “He tends toward the conservative and traditional; she favors a more youthful, modern look,” explains Abbott. “But that’s a perfect situation for me—my style is all about contrasts.”

Abbott made her name in Houston, where she operates her carefully curated shop, Shabby Slips Houston. Treading well-worn paths through Italy and France, Abbott stocks her coffers with both one-of-a-kind pieces and custom creations. Inside the store she displays heavily gilded furnishings and chandeliers dripping with crystal alongside stripped-down furniture covered in snow-white Belgian linen. It was here that the wife sought Abbott’s help. “She came in, looked around and said, ‘I love everything in here,’” Abbott recalls.

The house is a newly constructed Tudor-style affair with graceful architectural bones. High ceilings and large windows allow for plenty of light to bounce around, as does Abbott’s largely white-on-white palette. “You have to get the box right from the beginning, and by that I mean the background,” she says. “The light is the most important part of any project, because once you get it right, you can create magic with very few things.”

The wife made her husband promise that he wouldn’t bring a single item from his old house. He acquiesced, but he still wanted pieces with the classic proportions that he was accustomed to. Abbott responded to his request but upped the ante. A Louis XIV settee and chairs found unlikely bedfellows in leopard print carpet and contemporary graphic artworks.

French doors line one wall in the sizable living room, where two sitting areas with slipcovered seating designed by Abbott pull up to custom glass-topped low tables. A double-sided fireplace with a stacked-stone surround offers a glimpse into an adjacent informal breakfast area crowned by a horn chandelier from France.

In the nearby kitchen, antique-brass-finished pendants cast light onto an island on wheels, which is surrounded with stools detailed with bronze-finished nailhead trim.

Dinner parties are a common occurrence for the couple, so the dining room is an important staging ground. Abbott imported a Mediterranean table supported by lyre-shaped legs, an Italian decorative element Abbott favors for its “curving, baroque form.” Twin eighteenth-century wood, iron and crystal chandeliers strike a note of formality, which Abbott countered with simple custom high-backed chairs upholstered in cotton velvet. “The idea was to create a

casually elegant room,” says Abbott, who played off the rich mahogany-finished table and dark-wood French doors by adding a textured and patterned sea-grass rug. Rounding out the first floor is the wood-paneled library, a stately space softened by Art Déco-inspired armchairs from Dessin Fournir and Donghia glass lamps with wool shades. Darker textiles, such as a Turkish rug with eggplant tones or the deep-russet silk drapery fabric from Randolph & Hein, lend a luxurious feel. Artworks by Richard Serra, from his Venice Notebook series, hang on the walls.

Upstairs, Abbott returned to softer impulses in the master bedroom, selecting a neutral palette and tactile fabrics. Abbott paired eighteenth- and nineteenth-century pieces with functional furnishings such as a chaise longue from Baker and club chairs upholstered in Rogers & Goffigon wool. A gilded armchair covered in Belgian

linen and a pair of silver lamps are examples of Abbott’s deft use of restrained ornamentation. The process is simple, Abbott says. “Neutrality and an absence of clutter make a room easy to care for.”

After selecting every piece of artwork and finding the right place for all the furnishings, Abbott had to step back and declare the project finished. “I can always keep going,” says the designer, who admits that finding the harmony between seemingly disparate design tendencies can require a delicate calibration. “A good project has a variety of steps, with lots of selections and incarnations. That’s the only way you find the right balance.” ←







**opposite** An eighteenth-century Venetian mirror, a twentieth-century French console and a bronze-and-crystal French chandelier add European flair to the entry hall. **this page** In the dining room, Abbott established a feeling of elegance with Shabby Slips Houston furnishings. Eighteenth-century French chandeliers hang above upholstered chairs and a Mediterranean table. The sea-grass rug is from Creative Flooring Resources.





**above** The large kitchen features brass-finished pendants above a marble-topped island on wheels and stools with nailhead trim. White-brick











The master bedroom offers plenty of places to sit or lounge. French walnut stools covered with gold linen velvet pick up the buttery tone of a wool rug from Creative Flooring Resources. A Shabby Slips Houston club chair is near an eighteenth-century commode that Abbott paired with a nineteenth-century mirror. She dressed the bed with linens from the Longoria Collection and chose Clarence House velvet for the headboard. The chaise longue is from Baker. The birdcage chandeliers and a gilded armchair add a touch of whimsy.

