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RINGING A HOME TO LIFE REQUIRES MORE THAN MÈRELY ENLIVENING ROOMS WITH THE RIGHT MIX OF FURNISHINGS AND ACCESSORIES.

In the adept hands of interior designer Cameron Drinkwater, pleasing design is about devising a soothing enclave to serve all of her client's needs while showcasing a rather spectacular collection of art and books.

An ex-investment banker who, upon retiring, took classes at Brookhaven College and SMU to learn how to paint and draw, Laurie-Jo Straty needed a house that provided her space to create, and to highlight works from the likes of David Bates, Ross Bleckner, Claes Oldenburg, and Cy Twombly. Straty had already worked closely with architect Paul Turney of Turney & Associates to create a unique floor plan inspired by the courtyards of San Miguel, Mexico.

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previous spread: (from left) Homeowner Laurie-Jo Straty in her studio. The home is accessed through two sets of twisted-iron gates leading to a secluded courtyard, inspired by those of San Miguel, Mexico. Santiago Iron Works powder-coated the door and window frames with a custom gray-blue-green color Straty mixed to make the undivided glass disappear amongst the landscape. **this page:** Many spaces in the home serve dual purposes, including the entry, which transforms into a dining room with the help of two Oriscent tables on concealed casters. Straty's art collection graces every room in the home; here, a painting and sculpture by David Bates, purchased at Talley Dunn Gallery, share space with a gallery wall encompassing artists ranging from noted abstract muralist James Brooks to personal friends. The white vessel on the dining table and blue box on the console table are from Blue Print; the bowl on the dining table and the vessel on the console table are from Room & Board.



this page: At the far end of the living room, a daybed upholstered in Giant fabric and a pair of A. Rudin chairs covered in Hines cut velvet provide a perfect reading nook—or a cozy space for mother-daughter time. “I love hanging out with my daughters on that daybed,” Straty muses. “It’s the perfect girls’ wine gathering spot.” The rug is from Abrash, and the small bowl on the coffee table is from Coco & Dash. **opposite page:** The main living area offers plenty of what Straty calls comfortable yet “people-sized” seating—a pair of Kravet sofas and two swivel chairs from A. Rudin—with a Blackstone rug underfoot. The throw on the chair’s arm is from Serena & Lily. A painting by local artist David A. Dreyer hangs above a console table, accented with a vessel and box from Blue Print.





this page:
(from left) In the breakfast nook, a Crown Minor chandelier hangs above a Saarinen tulip table. Straty describes the keeping area off the kitchen as "the heart of the house"; it houses a custom sofa, Vanguard swivel chairs, and one of Straty's favorite pieces, a painting by James Brooks.

opposite page:
The home's floor plan uses passageways offset by wide, white-oak door jambs to draw you into each expansive space. In the kitchen, the pendant lights are from Visual Comfort. The footed bowl is from Blue Print.

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Balanced by a private entry set back from the street and encompassing a separate 700-square-foot art studio with clerestory windows, the airy abode required the finishing touch of a designer who could approach the home with a mathematical eye and an artist's palette.

Drinkwater and Straty met years earlier while serving on the National Charity League but had never worked together before. Approached about taking on the project, the designer coincidentally arrived wearing her future client's favorite color combination of a soft gray-green-blue, natural linen, and coral. Throughout their initial conversation, Drinkwater found it surprisingly easy to intuit Straty's expansive vision.

"She wanted a radiating concept of small opening to bigger

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AN INSPIRED COLLECTION

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with layers of intimate [spaces]," Drinkwater says. "I was able to listen, take all the things she liked, and filter it through my eye and experience to edit and design a cohesive-yet-collected interior that reflected her personality."

Drinkwater devised multifunctional rooms that Straty and her husband, Steve, could use for both entertaining and quiet contemplation, from a relaxed sitting area off the kitchen to a multipurpose living room. The most problematic space—the dining room—was designed to do double duty as an impactful entry, anchored by a vibrant gallery wall.

To complement the 10-foot-tall doors and windows that let the natural light pour in, Drinkwater implemented two tables on concealed casters from Draenert that could be pushed together for larger dinner parties.

Drinkwater also found new homes around the house for pieces from Straty's collection of antiques. A wooden sunburst motif adds a moment of surprise and delight mounted above the lacquered piano, and a delicate pair of 1940s French lamps were repurposed as elegant wall sconces in the powder bathroom.

"Camie has a vast knowledge of scale, sculptural form, and functionality," Straty says. "She incorporated many of our existing antiques and family pieces, creating warmth and coziness, [which were] two of my most desired outcomes."

"To me, it's more challenging and rewarding to be able to mix contemporary with vintage, especially if it has meaning for the

LAURIE-JO STRATY DEVELOPED A LOVE FOR ART FROM AN EARLY AGE.

"My mother did a tremendous amount of painting and drawing in her spare time, and I'd been around it always," recalls Laurie-Jo Straty, who grew up in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, near the Cranbrook Academy of Art. "During freshman year in college, I went to a student art show, and rather than buy posters to put in my room, I hung student art."

Today, her home is filled with an inspiring collection of paintings, drawings, and sculpture. (She credits her husband, Steve, with supporting both her acquisition and eventual pursuit of art.) Rather than buy pieces to fill certain spaces or decor, Straty simply buys what she loves and finds places to accommodate them. A Claes Oldenburg cardboard sculpture of keys, for instance, lives close to her grand piano, and a large painting from Sedrick Hukaby of her great-grandmother's quilt takes pride of place in her bedroom near its original inspiration. Because she says she "likes [her] art to relate," Straty has hung pieces from abstract expressionists Charlotte Park and Jack Roth together because they were friends in real life.

An artist in her own right, Straty surprisingly doesn't have her personal works on display, although there are plenty in her studio space adjacent to the house. Inspired by the industrial landscapes of her Midwest childhood, her growing body of work embraces the same cool tones of her decor. She hasn't begun selling her pieces quite yet, but it's not hard to imagine that soon a Laurie-Jo Straty will be hanging on the walls of other serious collectors of contemporary art.



*"Every time I walk in the door, I feel lucky to live here.
I've loved all my houses, but this is different."*

—HOMEOWNER LAURIE-JO STRATY

this page: (from left) Straty's art hangs in her studio, the exterior of which can be seen at right. The yard was expertly landscaped by David Rolston Landscape Architects. **opposite page:** After taking up drawing and painting upon retiring from the investment banking world, Straty craved a space to create, and thus her 700-square-foot studio space was born. Her artwork is inspired by the abandoned factories and farms of the Midwest, where she grew up and still spends summers. "It's a loss of an American style of life that I don't think is coming back," she says.



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client," Drinkwater says. "I think I helped with her desire to have this look like a collected home and have it make sense and be peaceful and beautiful."

Straty was so pleased with the final spaces, she gifted Drinkwater a design book as a memento a full year after the project's completion, along with a note honoring her considerable skills.

"She wrote me the most beautiful letter explaining why the house had to cure for a year and how grateful she was for my gifts of proportion, scale, balance, texture, arrangement, form, and color," the designer says.

For Straty, the final project is a sanctuary that enlivens her artistic spirit through day-to-day living.

"Every time I walk in the door, I feel lucky to live here," Straty says. "I've loved all my houses, but this is different. I don't know if it's the feeling when you walk in through the breezeway or the feeling of compression and expansion [through the rooms]. It's the palette; it's Camie's shapes and positioning of furniture; it's texture. She was the perfect partner in helping me execute my vision." ■



opposite page:
A painting by Fort Worth artist Sedrick Huckaby is of particular sentimental value. Hung in the master bedroom, the portrait depicts a quilt, now draped on a custom chaise beneath it, which Straty's great-grandmother made for Straty's mother. "I feel wrapped up by my family [when I see it]," Straty says.

this page:
(from left) The serene master bath is shaded by Harlequin embroidered silk draperies. The master bedroom features a custom bed covered in Lee Jofa velvet, accented with a throw from Coco & Dash.