



A STEP AHEAD

A HUSBAND-AND-WIFE TEAM CRAFTS A HOUSE FIT NOT ONLY FOR THEIR LIFESTYLE BUT ALSO FOR THE NEXT FAMILY TO CALL IT HOME.

BY Ashley Shaw | STYLING BY Jennifer Morris | PHOTOGRAPHY BY Michael Hunter



When Jennifer and Marvin Morris collaborated on a new home in a desirable Houston neighborhood in 2016, they didn't intend to stay. Instead, the design-savvy duo planned for future residents, carefully balancing their personal taste and the potential wish list of "the client in our heads," says Marvin, a cofounder of Morris Hullinger Design Build.

Jennifer, the principal of Jennifer Fredette Morris Design, and her husband took inspiration from the architecture of Florida's Emerald Coast, yet they were also conscious of the surrounding area's established aesthetic. "We wanted to do something that was a little on the margin of [traditional style]," says Marvin. "So, we created this home that has some contemporary elements but still has the undertones of a classic Gulf Coast feel."

A monochromatic plaster exterior sets it apart from nearby brick abodes, but dormer windows, exposed rafter tails, and a slate roof keep the appearance Southern and timeless. Inside, Jennifer and Marvin continued the tone-on-tone scheme by opting for a nearly all-white palette, including trim and ceiling beams. "It's very light and bright and airy, so it has that feeling of being near the coast," says Jennifer, who capitalized on the abundance of sunshine that streams in and used minimal window treatments.

Bearing their own lifestyle in mind as well as that of future owners, Marvin incorporated built-in storage that melds seamlessly with the overall design, including pull-

out cabinets beneath the main staircase and deep closets in the master bedroom that blend into the wall at first glance. "There's a lot of storage that's hidden," Jennifer says. Additionally, there's shelving that can function differently for various homeowners, such as a 12-foot-long shelf in the kitchen that Marvin designed and coated with durable automotive paint.

Neutral walls make for a beautiful blank canvas, something that was especially important to Jennifer as she added personalized finishing touches. "Any color you add to the house pops," she says. With an eclectic array of artwork collected over the years, the Morrises knew they would want ample display space in every room. "We were making it our own but also thinking about how other people could do their own things with it as well," says Marvin.

The couple and their young daughter have enjoyed the home for nearly three years, and they agree that the highest compliment they've received is that guests feel completely comfortable inside. "It's not something that can be achieved just with architecture or just interior design," Marvin says. "It's the combination of everything together."



Designers Jennifer and Marvin Morris wanted the dining room to be multifunctional since it's the heart of the house. Jennifer says it can serve as a library plus a place to do homework and craft projects, or it can be dressed up for formal occasions. A large vibrant painting by Nashville artist Myles Maillie enlivens the muted scheme, which is anchored by matte white oak floors. A special gift from Marvin to Jennifer, a modern chandelier reflects the couple's knack for mixing high-end styles with less expensive pieces, whether new or old.





Each piece of art on the bar's gallery wall is a memento from the Morrises' worldwide travels, and Jennifer selected a gray tweed wallcovering as the backdrop. In the European-style kitchen, a driftwood-hued island offers plenty of storage to compensate for the lack of upper cabinetry. Jennifer and Marvin chose honed Calacatta marble and Texas limestone for the countertops, because they appreciate the way these porous materials acquire a patina over time. "We wanted this to feel like a house that's lived in and gets used," says Marvin. Flanking the range hood, art lights on the Italian porcelain tile wall highlight photos taken on the couple's honeymoon.



In the master bedroom, closets flush with the wall on either side of a velvet sofa house luggage, linens, and lesser-used apparel. Simple Roman shades and draperies in a hushed hue frame the windows. The iron rod and neutral curtains are repeated downstairs in the foyer (page 8), where Jennifer aimed to soften the angular steel-and-glass front door and allow for privacy as needed.



A cozy dormer window seat with storage drawers and a girlish pink upholstered cushion is the focal point of the young daughter's bedroom. It also offers a lovely view of live oak trees in the front yard and those lining the sidewalks all around the neighborhood. (Opposite) The guest bedroom epitomizes the couple's affinity for blending timeworn accents with newer elements. A flea market find from Paris, an antique ladder imparts interest as a decorative bedside "table."

