

LIVING

MARTHA STEWART

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DOUBLE VISION

WHEN SHE PURCHASED A PAIR OF RUN-DOWN DUPLEXES, TEXAS INTERIOR DESIGNER KIMBERLY RENNER BOLDLY WENT WHERE NO HOUSE BUYER WOULD GO. TEN MONTHS—AND MANY, MANY GALLONS OF PAINT—LATER, SHE HAS TRANSFORMED THE SPACE INTO A LIGHT, BRIGHT, UNIFIED HOME FOR HER FAMILY.



HIGH NOTES

Kimberly Renner made the light installation at the top of the stairwell, opposite, out of fishing line, ceiling-mounted lights, and vintage postcards, which she collects. "I only used ones that were stamped and postmarked, with a message," Renner says. "To me, the messages are the important part."

CLEAN LIVING

As part of the renovation, Renner built a laundry room on the first floor, which is handy for a family with two young boys. The 1950s cabinets were salvaged from another renovation project Renner had been working on; the bright-orange doorway adds zing.

BEHIND

50 years' worth of overgrowth

in Austin, Texas, lurked a neglected, asbestos-shingled house. "It was the worst house in the neighborhood," Kimberly Renner says. In other words, it was a place that only a mother—and an interior designer and builder—could love. And she did indeed love it. She made a point of driving past it regularly, since it was a few blocks from the house where she lived with her husband, Dan, a lawyer, and their sons, Pace, 10, and Thompson, 9. When the couple heard that the building was for sale, they immediately made an offer. "I was so motivated to turn this house around," Renner says.

Making the house habitable—and right for her family—presented an unusual set of challenges. The house was divided into side-by-side duplexes, each of which had a living room, a dining room, and a kitchen on the first floor and two bedrooms on the second. Renner tore down the center wall to unite the apartments, turning the extra downstairs rooms into a sitting area and breakfast nook. She also merged the two kitchens to create one long galley. "We are a family that cooks together," Renner says. "It's not unusual for me, Dan, and the boys to all be in here at once." Upstairs, she carved out a master suite for Dan and herself, as well as a bedroom and a playroom for the boys.

To compensate for the house's low ceilings, Renner relied on high-gloss paint, using it on the walls, the ceilings, and even the stair treads. "It reflects light to make the rooms seem brighter," says Renner, whose palette included gray, white, and shots of orange. "No one even notices how low the ceilings are." She decorated with a mix of rehabilitated vintage pieces, from Thonet chairs to school desks and chairs from an office-supply salvage sale. Throughout, she used open shelving, putting dishes, towels, and toilet paper in full view; even plumbing is in plain sight under sinks. "Just because something is functional doesn't mean it can't be beautiful," Renner says. "Why hide it?"



MODERN FAMILY

As in the rest of the house, Renner covered the walls in the stairwell, left, with shiplap, for a contemporary yet homey feel. Here she poses with her husband, Dan, and their children, Pace (on the right) and Thompson. "They visited the job site often," Renner says. "So by the time we moved in, the house was very familiar to them."

AT YOUR SERVICE

In the breakfast-bar area, above, dishes and cocktail essentials are within easy reach on an industrial cart. A custom-built sink makes mixing drinks a cinch. The Thonet chairs and the school chairs are vintage finds. Four colorful wood-cut prints by artist Ann Conner pop against the slick gray walls.



RIGHT STRIPES

For the living room, far left, Renner reupholstered a pair of wing chairs in a striped fabric. "I couldn't find any fabric with a wide enough stripe, so I pieced together my own using strips of black and white Sunbrella," she says. The outdoor fabric is particularly durable.

MIX MASTER

The wing chairs pair with other stately looking pieces, left, such as a brown leather Chesterfield sofa and a brass Crate & Barrel table lamp. Lighthearted accents, such as the pillow with a pointing hand and the bird sculpture, keep the room from appearing too formal.



OPEN HOUSE

A low wall between the sitting and dining areas, above, partitions the spaces without making them feel closed in. In the dining area, Renner decorated with a mix of vintage (a table by Milo Baughman), new (a brass Circa Lighting chandelier), and DIY pieces (bookcases constructed out of cinderblocks, dorm-room-style).

COUNTER MEASURES

A 25-foot-long counter stretches across the galley kitchen, right. "It's efficient for cooking, but also long enough to serve as a buffet," Renner says. Reproduction library-style lights illuminate the counter; the steel cabinets and shelving were custom-made by Renner's brother, Cole Thompson.





VANITY PROJECT

The master bath, *left*, has a sense of whimsy, thanks to an orange steel vanity custom-made by local craftsman Frank Scaglione and a print by Austin artist Tom Druecker.

THE BOYS' ROOM

For her sons' bathroom, *above*, Renner designed a red cross from tiles above the tub ("It's their first-aid station," she says) and covered the floors in black rubber, which is virtually indestructible.

WORLD VIEW

Renner repurposed vintage roll-up maps as wallpaper on one side of her sons' room, *opposite*. Other walls are covered in cork so Thompson and Pace can pin up whatever they want. "They have lots of artwork, awards, and memorabilia they like to display," Renner says. The desk came from an office-supply salvage sale.

SEE WORKBOOK FOR SOURCES

THE PALETTE

For Renner, paint is paramount. These colors—mostly neutrals with a few bold pops—are similar to the ones she used throughout her house.



MILLION DOLLAR RED
Benjamin Moore
One wall of the boys' room is painted red. "They love it!" Renner says.



LIGHT MY FIRE
Kelly-Moore
Orange was used to "create hot spots of color as a counterpoint to everything else," she says.



ANTIQUE WHITE
Dutch Boy
She had an ivory paint diluted by 50 percent. It is light enough to lift the ceiling but feels rich.



FROST
Martha Stewart Living Paint
The boys' bathroom is painted white to match the porcelain, for a clean look.



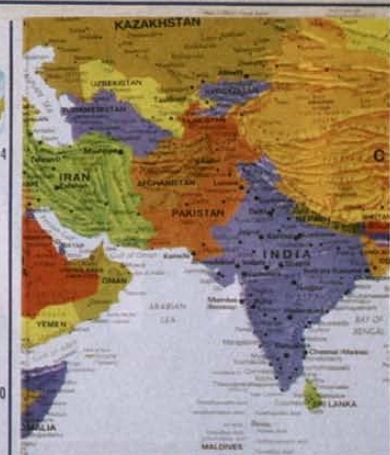
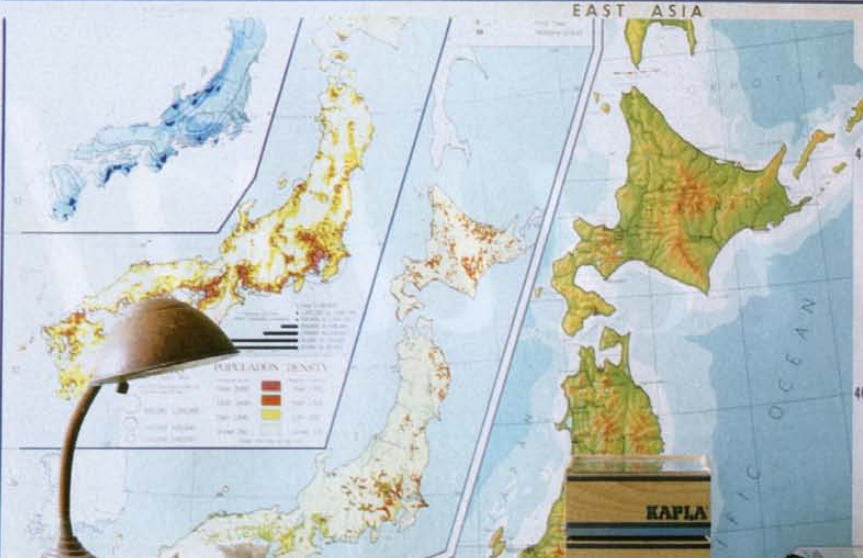
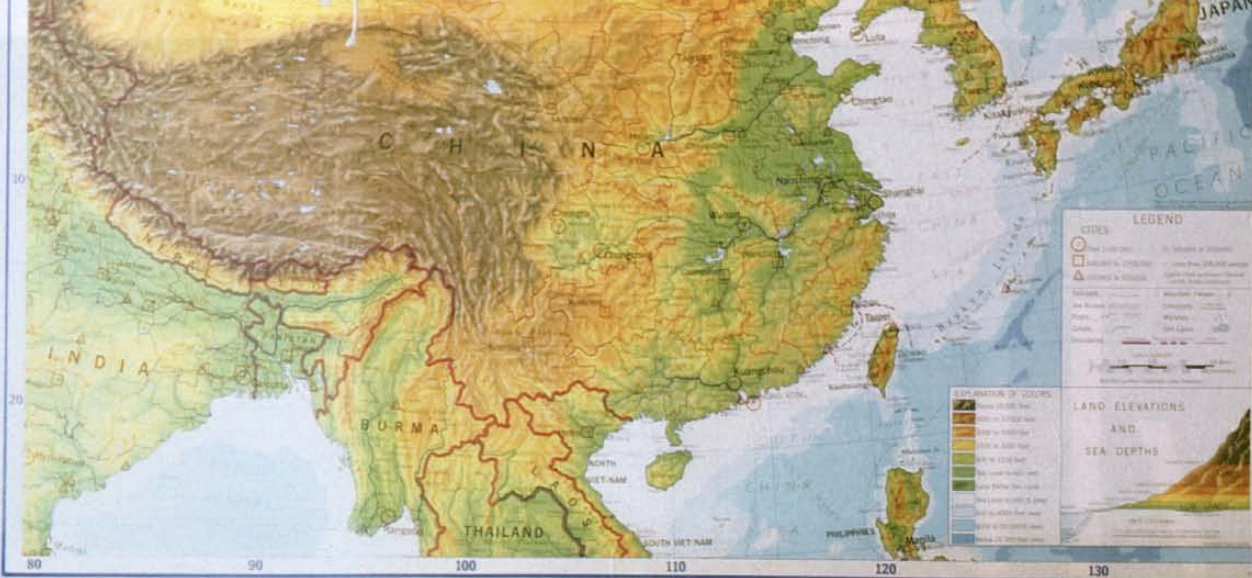
FLAGSTONE
Martha Stewart Living Paint
Deep-gray walls are "a warm backdrop for other materials and colors," she says.



BLACK
Pratt & Lambert
Renner used a true black on the stairs. "It's very classic in a high-gloss finish," she says.



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FORM MAP
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1918-21



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