

BEAUTIFUL SPACES FOR
A BETTER LIFE

At Home

COTTAGE COMEBACK

The Right Fit

Designer Catherine
Branstetter tailors
a 1920s Nashville
Tudor to suit her
growing family
BY MARY SHANNON HODES

108

Start a Revival
Branstetter freshened
the front door with
Valspar's Greenish
Gray (V144-6).

STYLING: COLSON HORTON



INTERIOR DESIGNER

InTERIOR DESIGNER Catherine Branstetter knows a good buy when she spots one—even if it’s on a 6-inch phone screen. When she and her husband, Austin, decided to move from Atlanta to his hometown of Nashville in 2019, the house hunt had to happen from afar. After missing out on a number of properties, Branstetter came across a 1920s Tudor online that she says “needed some love” but was in a prime location: It happened to be down the road from the elementary school Austin had attended. “I knew it was in a sweet neighborhood that was good for walking,” says Branstetter. They made an offer on it sight unseen. “You’ve just got to trust me on it,” she remembers telling her husband.

Because the home is in a district that’s listed on the National Register of Historic Places, there were specific architectural standards and rules for renovations. That was good news for Branstetter. “They preserve the integrity of the neighborhood,” she says. “I love all the historic charm.” The directives also helped guide her own house’s overhaul. She started with cosmetic upgrades that didn’t interfere with its good bones. “I wanted to brighten it all up,” she says of her choice to wash most of the walls in Benjamin Moore’s White Dove (OC-17). “That’s always my go-to paint color for interiors.”



Uniform Display
The designer chose all black frames to make the entry’s gallery wall feel cohesive.

While some updates were quicker fixes, selecting all the furnishings took them years. “I didn’t buy all new stuff,” she says. “It’s been collected over time.” The hunted-and-gathered approach to finding pieces is just one hint that a decorator lives here—you can tell they weren’t pulled off a showroom floor as a set. “I think we as designers put pressure on ourselves to have our homes look perfect,” says Branstetter, who launched her eponymous firm in 2021. “I’ve purchased pieces that I love over the years and made places for them.” Here, she shares how she got her house ready for real life in what she considers “phase one” of this Tudor’s new chapter.

INVEST IN THE INTERLUDES

Knock on the Branstetter’s front door, and you might catch a glimpse of their dog, Winnie, hanging out on the staircase, where she enjoys a direct view out the window. Schumacher’s Santa Barbara Ikat paper in Neutral breaks up the surrounding white walls, promoting this pass-through area to a standout space. A starburst mirror from Paris, two Museum Bees, and a vintage cobbler’s bench complete the entry.

Birds of a Feather

“I always knew I wanted to build this room around those,” says the designer about a trio of avian prints.



SET THE TONE

Right off the entry, the living room encapsulates Branstetter’s style—bright, inviting, comfortable, and layered. She found the elements in two cities over the course of her career (more than five years of which were spent under interior designer and mentor Carter Kay, who inspired her passion for pattern and her love of texture). “I do have a thing for rattan and bamboo furniture, so I seem to use a lot of it throughout the house—maybe too much,” she says with a laugh.



SHOW SOME RESTRAINT

The designer fell hard for the sunroom’s original windows, which, by some miracle, had survived the home’s entire life span. Given their impact, the space required a delicate decorating hand. Pierre Frey grass cloth on the walls and fabric on the chairs (Leandre in Indigo) underscore the tranquil tone. The tavern table (a family heirloom) rounds out the room, which is “a nice spot to have a glass of wine or read a book,” says Branstetter.

KNOW WHEN TO CHANGE YOUR MOOD

The dining room was the ideal spot for Branstetter to experiment with a mercurial hue, so she swathed it in Farrow & Ball's Inchyra Blue (No. 289). "It's like its own little jewel box," she says. "I like having the punch of dark color in there against a lot of the house that's lighter." The contrast, which benefits from the space's abundant natural light, also plays up an arch detail original to the home. Art by Stewart McDonald and window treatments by Pierre Frey mingle nicely with a flea market console and a dining set from Scott Antique Markets.



Touch of Patina
In lieu of a grand chandelier, the designer chose a warm, antique-style lantern from Visual Comfort & Co.

TAKE WHIMSY TO WORK

Behind a pocket door is the office, which Branstetter and her husband have both made good use of. “We went to Greece, and I picked up a couple of little pieces of art there,” she says. Inspired by the cheery scenes of their Mediterranean vacation, she framed them in white against Farrow & Ball’s Hague Blue (No. 30) and hung a Stray Dog Designs pendant. She adds, “It’s just a tiny little nook,” but a skylight floods the area with ample sun, ensuring the dramatic hue doesn’t shrink the space.



DON'T RUSH PERFECTION

A full renovation wasn't in the cards, so the designer had to make peace with the kitchen. “It’s not my dream,” she admits. “But it’s a good temporary fix until we can really redo it.” Her solution called for cost-saving elements like Lowe’s cabinets, to which she added beaded board for a more custom look.

REIMAGINE DIFFICULT SPACES

Although the home hadn't been touched for a while before the couple moved in, Branstetter could tell it had been through a Band-Aid "renovation" at some point. It was clear the long and narrow primary bedroom had been tacked onto the original structure. "It makes furniture arrangements tricky," she says, so she anchored the area with a woven four-poster bed from Williams-Sonoma and brought in pattern with a vintage suzani blanket she found on Chairish.



LET THE WALLS TALK

When it was time to decorate the nursery for her son, Charlie, Branstetter started with the wallpaper. "After debating for a long time, I found this one (Pierre Frey's Bengali)," she says. The rest followed suit. Farrow & Ball's Cord (No. 16) paint on the trim and Chelsea Textiles Trellis curtains both wrap the spot in warmth, and the Lee Industries chair and ottoman sport slipcovers for easy laundering.



Mint Condition

An antique mirror bounces light in the downstairs bath, which got a coat of Farrow & Ball's Green Blue (No. 84).