

# modern MERGER

Bright, bold pattern and old-world charm find common ground in a Houston designer's home.

writer April Hardwick   photographer Julie Soefer   producer Donna Talley



Designer and homeowner Janet Gust converted two 16th-century candlesticks found in France into lamps for her living room. Tall black shades give the antiques a modern crown.



**This photo:** Janet crafted a showstopping moment by pairing a sleek black-and-white cabinet—which is part of her new line of custom furniture—with an antique chair animated by a contemporary hand-painted fabric. “I love art on furniture—it instantly makes a statement,” she says. The wall art is by Donald Martiny. **Opposite:** The living room’s expansive Charles Hollis Jones coffee table features removable nesting tables.



The pairing of an elaborately carved bergère with a fabric featuring uninhibited strokes of black streaked across a white background is a metaphor of sorts for designer Janet Gust's decorating style. She's passionate about mixing old

and new, and she isn't afraid to do it in a bold way that's at once refined and edgy.

Her affinity for shaking up the status quo is on display in her 6,000-square-foot home in Houston, which she shares with her husband, Rick Gregory, and three French bulldogs, Gabby, Polly, and Izzy. "It was a blank canvas when I walked in, all in white, just waiting for art and color," she says. Like any great artist, Janet prepared her work surface, bringing in engineered French oak flooring in variegated hues to add dimension, depth, durability, and warmth. Then she layered on the accessories.

In the living room, she flanked an ornate 17th-century French cheminée with simply carved 12-foot-tall French doors. "I had the doors in storage with the hope that one day they would have a purpose," she says. "They make the space." A tête-à-tête chaise in luxe velvet hangs out in front of the fireplace with a Charles Hollis Jones coffee table. Bold strokes of color are introduced via a cream rug enlivened with intersecting navy lines. The blue repeats in accent pillows on the sofa, where a hint of chartreuse also shows up—just to keep the blue, white, and black palette on edge.

The living room's colors continue into the kitchen, where painted canvases showcase the hues in lieu of a traditional tile backsplash. The range wall originally had upper cabinets, but Janet ripped them out to make way for a custom high-gloss hood. Its sleek black finish mimics that of an automobile's shine, providing the focal point Janet felt the room was missing. "I believe a house should flow," she says, "As with a good



book, each room is the next chapter. This house had beautiful symmetry, but no character, so I had to inject it."

Bold doses of black are woven throughout the interiors, in furnishings and fabrics, adding drama to the home's white shell. "I gravitate to large prints that make bold statements," Janet says. "I know what works together because I take the time to study what I am buying and how each purchase will relate to the other items in the room."

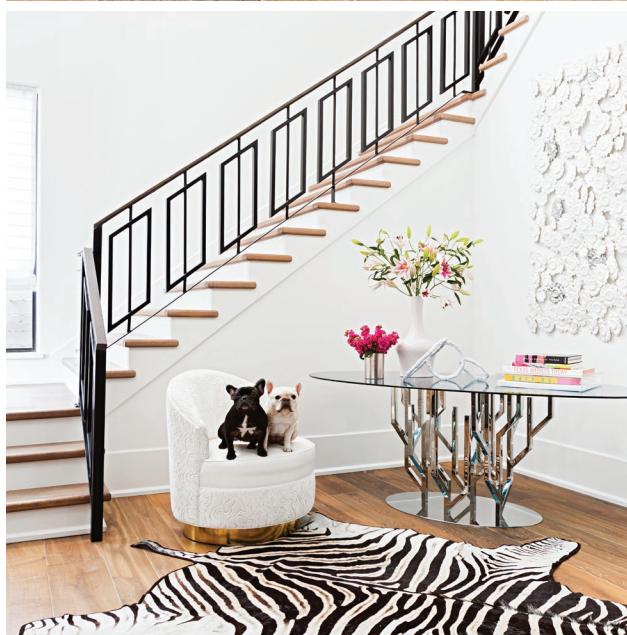
The master suite relies heavily on graphic renderings of black-and-white motifs, but the mood is lightened by flashes of silver and Lucite pieces that whisper rather than shout their presence. "Great design makes you happy," Janet says. "I have a passion and put my heart and soul in every project."

FOR RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 94.



*“I know how to design a comfortable space and build a story that is not yet written.”*

—DESIGNER AND HOMEOWNER JANET GUST



**Opposite:** In the dining room, Janet outlined the grandeur of a carved-and-gilt antique French mirror with vibrantly patterned draperies. The chairs are covered in a suede snakeskin-style pattern. The Charles Hollis Jones Lucite table lights up in the middle with the push of a button. **Above:** A pair of brass-and-glass globe light fixtures highlight the kitchen island’s waterfall-style countertop and add warmth to the room’s black-and-gray finishes. Janet commissioned the custom range hood, opting for a geometric shape that creates a sense of movement and implies a curve, even though the edges are straight.

**Left:** Janet added a third floor to the home and completed the addition with a modern metal staircase that adds dimension to the entry’s soaring 30-foot-tall ceiling. The exquisite Christofle table by French designer Ora-İto was a surprise Christmas gift to Janet from her husband; it sits under wall art by Danish artist Mie Olise Kjærgaard.



**This photo:** Boldly patterned black-and-white draperies frame a Lucite four-poster in the master bedroom. "I love that the bedframe is subdued but still makes a statement," Janet says. **Opposite:** Black tile borders the master bath's white marble tilework, giving the space an Art Deco vibe.



and durability for a family, whether they have five dogs and/or three kids. I also love when a client has a collection of anything to inspire a project, even if it is just one thing that is special.

**Q: What materials do you gravitate to and why?**

**A:** I appreciate fabrics that are both beautiful and easy to maintain, such as those by Perennials, which offer luxury and high performance. Then of course, I love fabrics that are couture in both design and structure. They are like a fine dress—when they are made of the best fabrics and are timeless in design,

## Q&A with DESIGNER JANET GUST

Having had a self-taught decorator and avid seamstress as a mother, Janet Gust can't remember a time when design and fashion weren't part of her life.

**Q: What excites you about helping people design a home?**

**A:** I love to be the interpreter of my client's visions, and to tell the story for them, even if they do not know how to get there. It's important to me to deliver comfort

they hold up to the test of time. On an accessories front, I try to curate handmade objects that are one-of-a-kind and that interest my clients. If a client does not collect anything, I try to encourage them to start. Even if it is books (which I love).

**Q: How do you add depth to a room?**

**A:** I always try to mix new and old items from yesterday and today. I love baroque, French, Italian, and midcentury pieces. I always start a room with an inspiration piece, whether it is art or a fabric with great depth from either a pattern or a solid color. I gravitate to items that are designed by artisans or handmade as opposed to machine made or mass produced.

**Q: Do you always go bold and inject a pop of color in your projects?**

**A:** I always try to find a "wow" in a room—it can be a bold color or fabric I start with as inspiration and build on. Each item is then curated with the others in mind. For example, the idea for the rug in my living room came to me after the other items were selected. I wanted an iconic rug, which is why I opted for one from an artist. The rug's pattern is from a photograph of a bridge. We had it colored to our palette of neutral and navy.