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IN ARKANSAS

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LARGE
IN SMALL SPACES**

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Cottage Charmer

A photograph of a living room. On the left is a fireplace with a dark wood surround and a white mantel. On the mantel are a green bowl and a silver starburst ornament. In the center is a white coffee table with a glass top and a decorative metal base, holding a vase of pink tulips and a book. To the right is a green armchair. In the background, a painting of a mountain landscape hangs on the wall, and a side table with glassware is visible. The room has a light-colored carpet and white walls.

IN LITTLE ROCK, A
NEWLY MARRIED
COUPLE ENLISTS
THE HELP OF
DESIGNER SUSAN
WALSH TO TURN
A BLAND HOUSE
INTO A PRETTY
AND PRACTICAL
HOME THEY'LL
LOVE FOR YEARS
TO COME



STORY: TIFFANY ADAMS
PHOTOGRAPHY: RETT PEEK
STYLING: CHIP JONES

Olivia Ramsey and her westies, Junebug and Mac, greet guests at the home's front door. Facing page: Designer Susan Walsh updated the front entry by trading an ironwork railing along the staircase for a paneled half wall that adds architectural interest. A skirted table softens the space and introduces guests to the home's pastel palette.



AAFTER MONTHS OF ONLINE SEARCHES, Olivia Ramsey found a home on a somewhat quiet but completely accessible and conveniently located street in Little Rock's Heights neighborhood. "I knew it had potential as soon as I saw it," she recalls. However, her husband Joe wasn't convinced and time went by before their realtor called to say there was a house available that they should see. As luck would have it, the house was the same one Olivia had scouted online, and once Joe saw it in person he knew it's potential outweighed any concerns. "The house was dark and dated, and the kitchen was very industrial," Olivia says of the home's state when they first purchased it. "We knew we would have to put a lot of love and time into it to make it our dream house," she adds. However, the couple was up for the challenge and set out to make the seemingly cramped cottage live larger through a host of wise design decisions and details.

DESIGN DIRECTION

Knowing they would need a professional to help with both structural updates and the overall interior design, the Ramseys called on Susan Walsh of Bear Hill Interiors. "Susan worked with my twin sister, Eliza (whose home was featured in our April 2015 issue), on her home, and she and I have similar tastes," Olivia says.

As with many home renovation projects, Susan notes that this one "started out small, but grew as we began to see some of the flaws of the house." Several areas became a key focus, including the entry, kitchen, and master bath and closet—all of which received structural or architectural updates in addition to a cosmetic makeover. In the entry, a paneled half wall replaced an outdated iron staircase rail to give the home architectural detail. The kitchen received new cabinetry and a built-in banquette. "The kitchen is such a hangout in any home, and I've come over here a couple of times while we were finishing up the project and seen them sitting around the banquette on their laptops or talking, so I know it's a space they really use," Walsh says. As for the master bath, "it was a total

gut," Walsh says. "It was not pretty and had a tiny closet at the end of it." To make it more accessible as well as attractive they installed a new bath and built a stand-up shower. Walsh also removed an existing wall between the tub and shower, replacing it with glass to create a more open feel. "In many custom homes, we are enclosing the showers now, but in a smaller space like this one, using the glass helps to create a flow that's more visually appealing," she adds.







upholstered in a soft green check pattern. This light, cheerful dose of color seems to open the house up in ways no architectural transformation could have adequately or cost-effectively achieved. “It’s airy, fresh, and so happy!” Walsh says.

PRACTICALLY PRETTY

Since the Ramseys are newlyweds, Walsh was careful to be especially considerate of the budget and found ways to be creative with both new and existing pieces. For example, while the kitchen received all new cabinetry, the existing appliances were retained. In the dining nook, the banquette was custom built for the space and then paired with chairs from Ballard Designs and a table that Walsh found at Fabulous Finds Antique Mall and had painted to match. “Family dinner is especially important to us, so we wanted to place importance

A painted sideboard sits along a shared wall in the dining and living room area. Walsh used plates from the couple’s wedding china as a creative—as well as meaningful—form of wall art. Facing page: While many of the home’s furnishings were repurposed finds, the dining room table, chairs, and chandelier were new pieces that bring a sense of elegance and formality to the home. Olivia’s parents commissioned the painting of Carmel Valley, California—where Olivia attended school—as a housewarming present.

PERFECTLY PASTEL

The palette also plays a large role in helping the cottage feel spacious. “She and her sister both love pastel colors,” Walsh says of Olivia’s chosen hues. “I’m also a big fan of [designer] Phoebe Howard’s and wanted to use a lot of blues and greens,” Olivia adds. The coordinated scheme starts with the exterior of the home, where the formerly dark brick was painted a creamy tan color that is accented with a light blue door that’s reminiscent of the sky on a clear spring day.

Other shades of blue are found on the walls of the master bedroom and in the kitchen, where an Ann Sacks tile adds a subtle touch of color to the backsplash. “Blue is one of Olivia’s favorite colors. I originally picked the Ann Sacks tile for the master bath [to use in the tub area], and she loved it so much that she said ‘Can we just use that for our kitchen backsplash, too?’” Walsh says.

A range of other pastels flow gracefully from one room to another, including an abundance of green. In the living room, a pair of chairs is covered in a citron-hued fabric; a light green can be seen on the entry table’s skirt; and the banquette and chairs at the kitchen’s dining area have cushions that are

on this area,” Olivia notes.

In the dining room, rather than opting for custom art along the wall behind the table or creating a focal point with a wall covering, Walsh proposed the idea of framing three pieces of wallpaper to create art. “Olivia loved that and we were able to use the wallpaper in an unexpected way,” she says. On a shared wall in the dining and living space, sits a sideboard that pulls double duty as a storage piece for the couple’s entertaining essentials and a buffet for serving guests at dinners and family gatherings. Above the sideboard, Walsh accented a mirror—which the Ramseys already owned—by framing it with plates from their wedding china collection. “I did that at her sister’s house, and she wanted it, too,” Walsh says. “It is a nice way for them to use something they have, and their wedding is so important to them, so it’s nice to have that memory up on the wall.”

“Overall, I wanted this house to be a place where we could relax. Susan was so helpful, and it was refreshing to work with someone who could help us visualize what each room could be, give us lots of options to choose from, and really keep us focused on the project,” she adds.



“IT’S *airy, fresh,* AND
SO *HAPPY!*”

—*Susan Walsh,*
Designer

The kitchen received all new cabinetry during the renovation. Walsh and the homeowners opted for a row of glass-front cabinetry along the back wall for a traditional way to display glassware and serving pieces, while French-bistro-inspired barstools keep the look young. A built-in banquette is a favorite hangout for the Ramseys. Facing page: The master bedroom is enveloped in a calming shade of blue that flows with the rest of the home’s palette. A new vanity with a complementary mirror and lighting, marble hexagonal flooring, and the installation of a neutral grasscloth wallpaper were just a few of the updates made to the master bath.





Design Resources

Interior design Susan Walsh, Bear Hill Interiors, Little Rock, (501) 907-9272, bearhillinteriors.com

Contractor Jeremy Hernandez Construction, Jacksonville, (501) 944-8749

Landscape design Maple Leaf Lawns, Little Rock, (501) 519-1114, mapleleaflawns.com

Accessories, bedding, lighting, tile, and upholstery Bear Hill Interiors, Little Rock, (501) 907-9272, bearhillinteriors.com

Art Bear Hill Interiors, Little Rock, (501) 907-9272, bearhillinteriors.com;

Cobblestone & Vine, Little Rock, (501) 664-4249, West Little Rock, (501) 219-3676, cobblestoneandvine.com

Carpet C&F Flooring and Rug Gallery, Little Rock, (501) 399-9909, candfcarpet.com

Countertops Casa Blanca Granite, Little Rock, (501) 455-2520, casablancagranite.com

Fixtures Southern Pipe & Supply, locations statewide, southernpipe.com

Flooring Acme Brick, Tile & Stone, locations statewide, acmebricktileandstone.com

Furniture Bear Hill Interiors, Little Rock, (501) 907-9272, bearhillinteriors.com; Fabulous Finds Antique Mall, Little Rock, (501) 614-8181, fabulousfindsantiquesanddecorativemall.com

Hardware PC Hardware, Little Rock, (501) 224-1724, pchdwe.com

Window coverings Mountjoy's Custom Draperies, Mabelvale, (501) 455-2216

