

BY HANNAH
J. PHILLIPS
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CASEY DUNN



SEEING GREEN

A Bouldin bungalow is transformed into a colorful oasis in the heart of South Congress



OPPOSITE: Interior designer Sara Oswalt used a textured toile wallpaper with unexpected urban scenes alongside Shou sugi ban shiplap in the clients conservatory.



The coffee table is one of a few '80s elements peppered throughout the house. OPPOSITE: Architect Elizabeth Baird, interior designer Sara Oswalt and landscape architect Shaney Clemmons.

The A-Team behind this refreshed and reimagined urban retreat includes architect Elizabeth Baird, interior designer Sara Oswalt of Purveyor Design and landscape artist Shaney Clemmons of Shademaker Studio. All sole practitioners and solo business owners, the three women were thrilled at the chance to collaborate with one another – and with a home-owner willing to take creative risks in his restored Eva Street cottage.

“You don’t get many opportunities for feedback when you work alone,” says Baird, “so it was really great to act as sounding boards for things like the color of the stucco, the green trim on windows and cabinets. Sara really pushed me creatively – hopefully we all did – and Shaney’s work really brought it all together, since we have so many views to the backyard.”

That connection to the outdoors was imperative to all three women, shining through in big and small details throughout the home. Tearing the house down to its studs allowed Baird the freedom to shift the traditional front windows to a placement that invites more natural light. In the bright green kitchen, window sliders lead to the lush backyard, while a new glass breezeway marked by geometric black and white flooring draws the eye toward the dining room extension. Here, picture windows frame Clemmons’ bamboo screen outside, while plants hang from steel shelves (Oswalt’s own design) to create a greenhouse effect.

Another shared aim was to maintain a connection between the original house and its newer elements, flowing between the original footprint in the front to the more-modern addition in the back. The dark breezeway into the kitchen acts as a gateway between old and new, but you have to look closely to notice some of the subtle details that mark the transition. The shiplap is original to the home, but has been charred to charcoal black using a Japanese Shou sugi ban technique, which Oswalt had considered playing with in her own home.

With a background in fashion and photo-shoot styling, Oswalt loved the client’s willingness to let the team experiment with details like the wood-charring

and a mix of colors like bright green, gray, red and orange throughout.

“He was really open and trusting, and he didn’t want it to be just a normal house,” says Oswalt. “That made it an open canvas: We were always asking how it could look different.”

The intentionally sarcastic wallpaper, used in what came to be known as the conservatory, incorporates the client’s humor and style. The green toile design appears traditionally French at first glance – until you notice that the usually rustic pattern instead features city scenes like an old woman on a park bench and a guy getting mugged.

“The client is really eclectic,” according to Oswalt, “so the take on the house was kind of humorous and not so serious – a wacky mix of stuff that all still flows. I always try to come up with five elements that will connect every room. With him, the elements were just more mixed. We were calling it Bavarian/Scandinavian/modern with a hint of ‘80s.”

Perhaps the best place to see that mix is in the dining room, as one looks forward to the front of the home. From that vantage point, the charred wood adds a Bavarian touch to the dark, Scandinavian-inspired fireplace, and you can see the progression of green from the front mint trim, to forest green toile, to the kitchen’s pop of primary. That final touch of bright green brings in the hint of ‘80s, intensified by a built-in shelf to showcase the client’s vintage sunglasses collection.

Access from the living room to the upstairs master suite (made more open and luminous by Baird’s addition of two dormers) is via painted terracotta stairs, which also happen to reference the backyard’s crushed granite gravel path. Outside, a Hotel Saint Cecilia-inspired cement bench “acts as an anchor,” says Clemmons, “directing your focus to the house when sitting outside and looking back in.”

The L-shaped bench brings that backyard connection full circle, mirroring the perpendicularity of the original house and its new extension. The opposed but open corners create an organic flow between the exterior and interior while simultaneously enclosing the entire plot as a private urban enclave just steps from South Congress.





"The black-and-white tile in the breezeway to the dining room extension is a shout-out to the home's original kitchen. The asymmetrical pattern "breaks up the wood when you stand in the living room of the old house looking all the way through the kitchen to the dining room," Baird says, as does the decorative wood pattern in the dark shiplap breezeway."

Baird created a niche for the homeowners colorful sunglass collection.



Terra-cotta painted stairs lead to the master suite and provide an opportunity to highlight the homeowner's art collection, like this numbered and signed Dalí print.