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# This Dallas Family Home Is a Livable Ode to High Art and Architecture

The designers behind Avrea Wagner transform a Bud Oglesby house into a cozy backdrop for works by Roy Lichtenstein, Frank Stella, and Mies van der Rohe

By Paola Singer

Photography by Nathan Schroder

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Ashley Avrea Cathey and Mary Beth Wagner, the lead designers behind Avrea Wagner, are known for creating classically elegant interiors filled with rich fabrics, soft colors, and timeless silhouettes. Yet when a Dallas client asked for a completely different look—a home that stayed true to its modernist architecture and that complemented a bold collection of contemporary art—they jumped at the opportunity. “We tend to be more traditional, but were really excited to do something outside of our wheelhouse,” says Avrea Cathey. “It was a departure in the best possible way.”

The fact that the client, Lauren Bender, was a personal friend made the endeavor all the more enjoyable. “I knew they could really warm up the space,” says Bender, a beauty and wellness entrepreneur. “We wanted to respect the bones of the house but also make it super comfortable for my family of five.” The house in question, a 4,500-square-foot residence built in 1954 by Texan architect Bud Oglesby, has a vast living area with double-height ceilings, a study that opens into a walled garden, a family room with an open kitchen, and second-floor bedrooms that overlook a beautifully landscaped garden with a pool.



The house was built in the 1950s by noted Texan architect Bud Oglesby, who was considered a master of light because of his strategic and often surprising placement of windows. In this sitting area, which occupies the same space as the living room but has a lower ceiling, Oglesby framed the fireplace with uneven vertical panels. The harmonious asymmetry is echoed in the central artwork by Frank Stella, called Sinjerli Variations. An antique Chinese chest used as a side table is a counterpoint to the modernist armchairs.

Oglesby, who was considered a master of light, placed an abundance of rectangular windows throughout the back of the house—some are very narrow horizontal panes, others wide and vertical—leaving the façade nearly windowless. Other interesting architectural details include off-center fireplaces, and beams and columns that create unexpected nooks. It's a fitting backdrop for the striking artworks brought in by the homeowners—pieces by the likes of Roy Lichtenstein and Frank Stella—some of which were inherited from Bender's grandmother Jeanne Fagadau, who was a noted arts patron. "I grew up in a family of art lovers," says Bender. "And now my husband and I are collecting on our own."

To make the most of these treasures, the designers used different approaches, in some cases going strong by choosing colors that stand up to the artist's palette and in others pulling back. The common theme throughout the home is a combination of iconic modernist furniture with contemporary and classic items that help create an eclectic and highly livable milieu. "Midcentury style can lend itself to be cold and austere, and that's not what the client wanted," says Wagner. "We added some pieces that were appropriate for that era but incorporated really cozy textures." In the living room, for example, Mies van der Rohe's slim Barcelona chair is paired with a plush velvet sectional strewn with pillows and surrounded with stacks of hardcover books. "They brought incredible creativity and energy to the project but also a very laid-back manner," says Bender. "It was so much fun."



Avrea Wagner, a Texas interiors firm, decorated this 4,500-square-foot home in Dallas for a family of five. The Bud Oglesby–designed house is in Greenway Parks, a verdant neighborhood north of the city developed nearly a century ago. Green belts, used as common backyards, are interspersed throughout the area. Oglesby conceived a very private façade, placing most of the windows in the back of the property, which has a garden with a pool.



A set of dazzling artworks—the abstract pastel seen here, by Los Angeles artist Mimi Lauter, and a piece by Roy Lichtenstein on the opposite wall—anchor the dining room. “We wanted everything in this room to be secondary to the art,” says Avrea Cathey. The large wooden table, a family heirloom, was placed over a custom handwoven rug from Interior Resources. A 1950s glass-and-brass chandelier from John Gregory hangs above it.



Original brick floors are seen in the hallway leading to the open kitchen and family room. The art on the back wall, called Works on Paper, is by the German abstract artist Günther Förg, and the round piece on the side wall is by Michelle Grabner, an American artist. Three Bertioia stools complete the modern look.



“Nothing is symmetrical here; it was an interesting room to design,” says Avrea Cathey of this informal sitting area by the kitchen, which features an off-center fireplace and a variety of beams and nooks. A custom sectional, backed by a “Lapidus” oak console from Rose Tarlow, was paired with Hans J. Wegner’s Ox chair, upholstered in an olive wood flannel from Elitis, with a leather trim.



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While preserving the midcentury style of the property, the designers added a sense of warmth by mixing modernist, contemporary, and classic furnishings, using an eclectic color palette that complemented the bold works of art collected by the clients, such as this large-scale oil painting by Nancy Graves. The oversize tufted sectional is upholstered in a navy velvet fabric by Holland & Sherry. It was paired with Mies van der Rohe's iconic Barcelona couch.



Textured fabrics in various shades of gray help create a cossetting atmosphere in the study, which opens into a walled garden. "The rest of the home is really light and airy; we wanted this to be different," says Wagner. "We used the sofa as a starting point." Upholstered in a large-check lambswool fabric by Rogers & Goffigon, the sofa was paired with a Holland & Sherry silk rug and an ottoman featuring hair-on hide, also from Holland & Sherry.



A series of small, delicate drawings by Hilary Fagadau and a patterned wallpaper in pastel hues help create a soothing atmosphere in the master bedroom. The platform bed was upholstered in a light gray wool flannel from Holland & Sherry. Constructivist-style bedside tables from A. Rudin add a modernist touch.



In this terrazzo-floored downstairs bathroom, used as a powder room, the designers added a visual punch with a chinoiserie-inspired silk wallpaper from Fromental called Bambois.