



# Southern home

Welcome *the*  
HOLIDAYS

*Luxe Gifts  
to Give*  
*Festive Ideas  
for Every Room*

# *Southern* SIMPLICITY

A TEXAS DESIGN TEAM TRANSFORMS AN OLD HOUSE WITH CHARACTER INTO A NEW ABODE WITH MODERN ACCENTS YET TIMELESS STYLE.

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Previous pages: The light and airy garden room faces the rear courtyard garden. Fabric selections of linen, velvet, and mohair create a warm and natural environment, and an heirloom tea cart adds to the ambiance. These pages, above, below, and opposite: For a subtle and chic infusion of holiday cheer in the living room, designer Melinda James and her team brought in a live Christmas tree from Terrain and added ivory, pearl, and metallic decorations. Above the writing desk, art from Pheromone Design and a small sunburst mirror illustrate the harmonious melding of modern and traditional style.

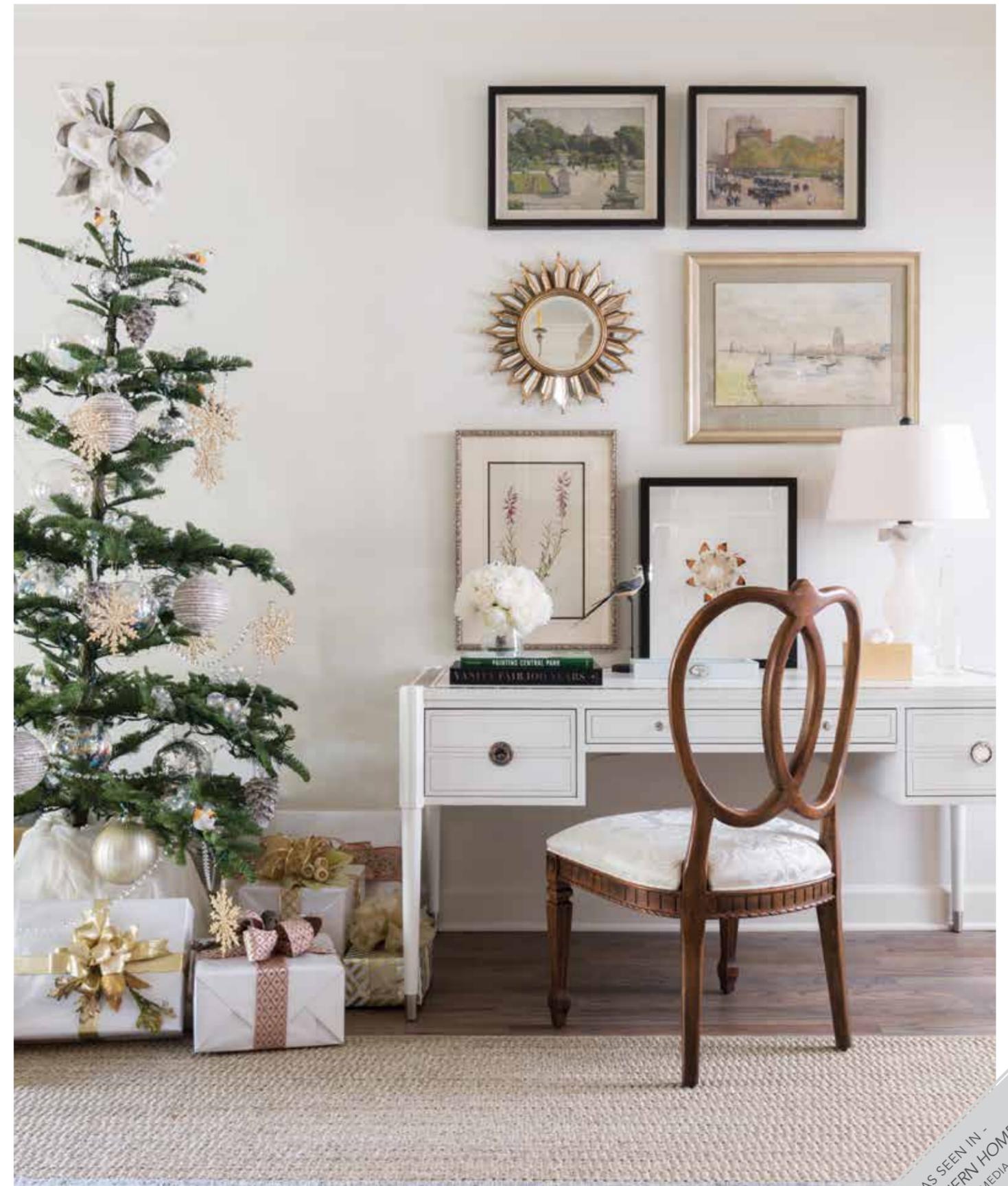


**B**orn and raised in Beaumont, Texas, Donna Rabalais is Southern by nature, and she wanted to find a home that was as well. Her search kept coming up short, and when she discussed her disappointment with

friend and interior designer Melinda James of M. James Design Group, a change in course occurred. James took Rabalais to a home that had been on the market for a long time in the established neighborhood of Thomas Park and explained her vision for the dated property.

“The previous homeowner liked really dark, bold hues. Every wall and ceiling was a different color,” says James. “There was also glitter on the ceiling. But if you could get past all of that, you could see that the home had character and really great bones, including two fireplaces and floor-to-ceiling windows with incredible views.”

James and her team had worked with Rabalais on several projects prior, so a solid foundation of clear communication was already established. Says Rabalais, “I prefer things that are soft and simple, so this house wasn’t my taste. But I loved the area, and I knew Melinda



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Below: In addition to lovely garden vistas, the dining room also features the spectacular Jacqueline chandelier by Aerin Lauder. Fresh garland and paperwhites bring the outdoors in and extend the holiday spirit. A large Christmas tree covered in fruits, berries, and collected glass ornaments stands alongside the Madeline pedestal table from Century Furniture surrounded by comfortable slipcovered chairs.



Above: In the dining room, matching mirrors from Lillian August add an air of refinement, as do handmade wreaths in varying shades of green. Below: In the kitchen, the design team reconfigured the layout, added marble on the island, and brought in a new sink and gas range. To make the vent hood above the range seem more harmonious, they gave it a facade that mimicks the adjacent cabinets.





could do something really great with the place.”

Rabalais purchased the home in March 2017 and turned the keys over to James and company, giving them plenty of time to complete the renovations before the holiday season. Using Benjamin Moore’s “Plaster of Paris” on the walls and “Rocky Beach” on the doors and trim, the design team changed the look from avant-garde to French-Southern chic. In the garden room, existing oak floors from the original construction in 1981 were refinished. The floors were then matched and extended throughout the home.

The next order of business involved updating the

kitchen. “We made it lighter and more functional,” says James. “Adding obscured glass to the long row of existing cabinet doors created a clean look.”

Rabalais moved into her new abode in July 2017, and as the holidays approached, she and James worked up some festive ideas. “I like traditional red and gold decorations,” says the homeowner, “and I like to keep it simple yet warm.” With these preferences in mind, James used a mix of fresh and faux greenery. From sugared fruit to beribboned wreaths, each room received at least a few Noel-inspired nods. “Melinda and her team made it all work so beautifully together,” says Rabalais.

Above and opposite: In the master suite, the tufted velvet bed from Lillian August provides a luxurious centerpiece to the room. Homeowner Donna Rabalais selected the fine assortment of linens and pillows. “I like to keep things simple and pretty,” she says. A set of bedside tables with timeless silhouettes, subtle texture, and ample storage space adds to the simplicity. Classic bedside lamps from Ralph Lauren complete the look.

