



LIVING IN TEXAS
design

DALLAS

PERFECT HARMONY

Designer Ashley Avrea Cathey blends pattern and texture to delightful effect in her family's colorful Dallas home.

By Helen Thompson // Photography by Stephen Karlisch

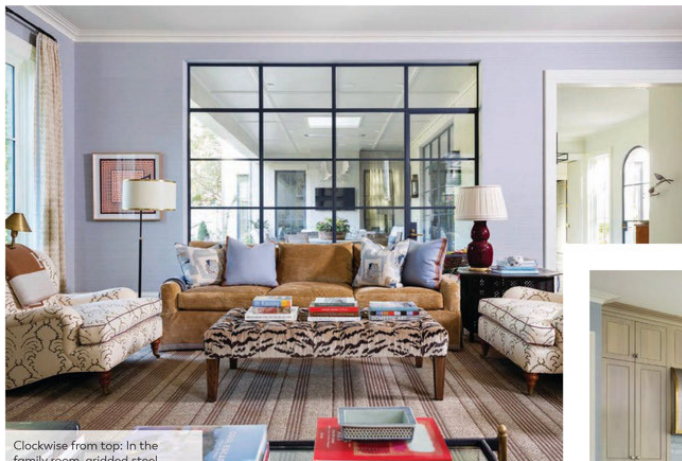
Who knew that a childhood fascination with floor plans in the back pages of Ashley Avrea Cathey's parents' coffee-table book about log cabins would turn into an obsession? Their logic was a revelation for the Dallas interior designer: "It was easy for me to dream about what the rooms would be," she says. When Cathey got to the University of Texas, the obvious path for the floor plan aficionada was to pursue a degree in architecture. As good as it was, though, the idea fell short: "I realized I need the freedom to furnish," Cathey says about a profession that sometimes ignores furniture. Instead, she got a degree from the New York School of Interior Design. In 2009, she teamed with another Dallas interior designer, Mary Beth Wagner, to form Avrea Wagner (avreawagner.com).

The pair's work reflects their vision of a sumptuous tailored style. Recently, Cathey was able to unbutton that traditional look in a just-completed family home for herself, her husband and their four children. The two-story slurried-brick residence designed by Dallas architect Jerry Coleman is a dream of symmetry. An enormous entry hall slices through the house—the master bedroom and study are to the

CONTINUED...



From top: The understated exterior of the residence that designer Ashley Avrea Cathey shares with her husband and four children belies the unrestrained exuberance of the finishes and patterns found inside; Cathey framed the powder room with a bold blue camouflage wallpaper by Philip Carrivan.



Clockwise from top: In the family room, gridded steel windows overlook a patio where many of the Cathey parties take place; the kitchen is meant for casual living but is also on full view during parties—pleated drum shades on the pendants over the island add a dressy touch; in the master bedroom, the designer orchestrates multiple patterns deftly, keeping them all within a compatible range of colors that signal that serenity can also be interesting.



« “I didn’t want [a dining room]. When we have parties, we bring tables in and eat [in the foyer].”

—ASHLEY AVREA CATHEY,
DESIGNER AND HOMEOWNER »

...CONTINUED right of the hall; to the left is the living area. Upstairs is the children’s domain. But predictability ends there: Cathey used her own house to challenge design stereotypes that didn’t accommodate her family’s lifestyle.

For instance, there is no dining room. “I didn’t want one,” she says. Instead, the fearless designer opted for the huge foyer. “When we have parties, we bring tables in and eat there.” She also didn’t want a living room. There is a family room, though, which opens directly onto the kitchen. With 11-foot ceilings, two walls of steel-gridded floor-to-ceiling windows and long sightlines, it is a 60-by-25 setting for Cathey to experiment not just with functionality but also with decor. She mixes pattern and texture with the confidence of an artist awarded the luxury of a huge canvas.

In the living area, lavender linen wallpaper is the backdrop for an ochre Pierre Frey velvet-covered sofa. Two Jindrich Halabala chairs are upholstered in plaid, a casual dynamic next to the formal antique Chinese chests flanking the sofa. The tiger-striped velvet ottoman makes perfect sense in this array of pattern in which purple hues play a big role. Although the kitchen gives a first impression that it’s mostly neutral shades, closer examination reveals deep plum-colored veins coursing through the Breccia Viola marble island countertop. Cathey upholstered the chairs in a wild animal print, just for fun. In the master bedroom, a large paisley in eggplant covers the walls, a bold graphic background against the subtle plaid of the sofa—both are overseen by the black Julian Chichester pendant that resembles a cluster of six study lamps. The colorful exuberance was inspired by the deep pinks of the D. Porthault linens on the bed. “I took a traditional pattern and went crazy,” says Cathey, who at long last has found the freedom to furnish that she always knew she needed. ■