

# drab to fab

In **two weeks' time**, a young Atlantan and her designer add **artistic flair** to a plain **builder townhome**.

*Style and Color: Lisa Henry. Photography: Anthony Lombardi. Photo: Jennifer Joseph.*

Reaching across and a nod to her favorite things: her mother's living room. A wicker coffee table was given a proper dust, and flowers and plants brought the personalized style. "I'm not a designer, but I like to see things that I can't find online," says the young homeowner. "I'm not a designer, but I like to see things that I can't find online."

Bella Antiques



The mix of textures and shapes in the dining room makes it a flexible space for being both dining room or office. The best piece of antique furniture in the room is the vintage chalkboard. Other items, such as the wrought-iron light fixture made from an ocean pole, are striking conversation pieces.

## Mande Harris was ready for a fresh start.

Facing a new beginning after a divorce, the real estate executive got her confidence in a way to refresh the next chapter of her life. "I wanted to do better when I really did," Mande says. "I definitely wanted things a little more feminine."

One was a dark leather club chair and heavy accessories from her previous home, and to come interior designer Sherry Hart with a lighter color palette. To gel it, Hart and Mande wanted to add elements to the built-in table credenza and create a seating area to revivify with breath—all in the additional time frame of a few weeks. The seat for the seat or prove another, but another, and another were for just the right items. Here are the decorating lessons they learned.

**PAINT PERFECT.** When Mande opened the sky blue accent chair, she knew right away she wanted them in her living room as a focal point. "I like these wooden legs, whereas other parts of the room are more contemporary," Hart says. With the distressed white in place in a good neutral tone, and a sea-green on the base, it was time to pick wall paint. One worded Mande had the walls painted spring green—although it looked right on the search, but not all were. Luckily, paint is so easy to. Together, Mande and Hart made the switch to a light gray hue. "It works well with any other color in the room," Hart says.

**BY THE BLACK.** The pair debated whether to go all of a black bed that Mande brought years ago. "I really wanted to be feminine in the girls," Mande says, "and I thought the bed was so masculine." With Harris helping that every room needs a little black—plus the historical beauty of incorporating living items—the designer took the base off the dark room with a charcoal headboard and end tables.

**LET FRESH SHINE.** An ornate clear lamp on the bedside chair provides a light touch to the room's bedroom and, like the bed, was part of Mande's former home. In the dining room, Mande's old sideboard got a new look with the clean-lined and modern backs placed on display instead.

**FLAUNTER CONVERSATION PIECES.** In the dining room, a custom table from a flea-market vendor has a strong presence that offers the perfect foil to the room's traditional French chairs. "These chairs are classic and can go anywhere in a home home," Hart says. The chalkboard, another flea-market buy, becomes an ever-changing part of art.

In Mande's bedroom, a pillow with a brocade stripe was a good foil to a flea market—its historical from an old flea rack. That distance from the same side and custom pillows in a similar blue provide just the right amount of contrast.

**ONE-OF-A-KIND COLLECTS.** Mande and Hart chose heirlooms and accessories that were just a little different from the usual retail selections. The coffee table in the living room, for instance, was formerly a program case, and the room's Rose Tarjo got historical from an old photographer's light.

Hart also nudged Mande into buying seasonal pieces—such as the living room's bed pillow for \$80 each—ones when they didn't know how something might fit in.

On the search, Mande's confidence may resemble the neighborhood, but Mande didn't get a new beginning and a look that's all her own.

PHOTO: JESSICA BROWN

## What to put on mantels and bookshelves?

Designer Sherry Hart knows that people are often intimidated by filling the space over a mantel or inside a bookcase. For Sarah's Home's home, Hart chose two old trays that had been turned into mirrors—their rectangular shape and weathered finish are a nice contrast to the traditional mantel where they sit. For bookcase accessories, she opted for a black color scheme, which united such items as picture frames and books. Here are a few more of Hart's ideas.

**USE ARCHITECTURE.** Look around the house to see if there are architectural items that could be displayed asymmetrically. Think egg, Hart says, such as an old egg gate.

**GO ROUND.** Because most mantels are rectangular, seek out featured spheres or other rounded shapes.

**LEAVE IT ON.** Hart likes overlapping black-and-white artwork in frames so that one frame covers the other a bit. But don't use small frames, she says.

**GET ON THE FLOOR.** For bookshelves, Hart likes grouping things in threes or choosing a common theme, such as a unifying color. To give bookshelves a uniform look, turn books around so the pages—not the spines—show.

**THIS FINISHING TOUCH** adds this rustic, distressed table with a distressed zinc top as a place to eat or work in her kitchen. **CAROLYN**

The vintage book shelves are from a cabinet. To distress them, Hart used a mix of black, rubber-duckie, and white paint. She also painted a green egg gate and used it as a place to eat or work in the room.



The two weren't sure where a zinc-top table purchased off a vendor's truck might fit in. Now it's a perfect breakfast bar.



"Throw pillows are a great way to get a custom look for not a lot of money. Change them out to freshen a room down the road."

—MICHELLE BARNETT SMITH

"I never would have guessed this color for the walls, except, but once I saw enough of nothing else," Michelle says, grinning. "I'd try olive for a second color and see how it'd look. I love the color. It's in the house." A few special items—vintage drawers and a bench, pale wooden tables—give the space a bit of history. Maps on the wall, however, are new.



CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: A weathered copper head table and the right pattern. A banner pigeon coop topped by glass in the living room coffee table. A chandelier with basket hangings in the kitchen. Designer Sherry Hart (standing) and homeowner Wendy Harris. (See more recent tour) More for a touch of green on tables. White chairs from a flea market are a graphic element on the island.



## Let the flea market come to you

Sherry Hart and other designers known for their mix-and-match style can often be found at weekend flea markets or prowling around out-of-the-way antique stores. "I'd know not anything can hang out all day at flea markets," she says, "so it's great that you can find cool stuff in collage these days."

Hart says to check out those retailers that sell vintage or vintage-looking items.

smarrack.com  
 sherry.com  
 michellemade.com  
 wendyharrisdesign.com  
 sherryhartsdesign.com  
 wendyharris.com