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OPPOSITES ATTRACT

This sprawling home combines two distinctive styles to form a beautifully unified space.

written by Paige Bowers

Believe it or not, the following is not a marriage counselor's worst nightmare, but an interior designer's dream come true: His clean-lined modern pieces had to be combined with her exotic, feminine wares in a rambling, 10,000-square-foot English country-style home. The result had to be lighthearted and livable in a way that reflected this very private couple's love of family, travel and each other. >



"Anyone can put things out and make a room beautiful," says Manor House Interiors' Wanda Perez, the designer who worked on the home. "But when you're combining personalities, there's a psychology to it that involves working with the individual to see how they'd like their home to reflect them. If you don't do that, you'll get an unhappy client with a house that doesn't reflect them at all."

Here's what Perez had to work with: A couple that had been conducting a long-distance relationship up until two years ago, when they decided they wanted to live together, but needed more living space to accommodate their families and eclectic collectibles in a neighborhood where you didn't have to sit in 30 minutes worth of traffic just to get to dinner. The couple fell in love with an airy, 18-room limestone and stucco home built by Panama Properties in a subdivision just outside of the city limits.

"It was the openness of the house that we loved, and the fact that we could display our artifacts" says one of the homeowners, a 45-year-old woman who owns a local poultry company. "But we wanted to make the house livable so you wouldn't feel like you were coming into a museum. I mean, we have two sons, my cats, and some dogs and there's no yelling and screaming about how you can't go into that room or that you have to get off that furniture. We're just not pretentious people."

The home's asymmetrical English design includes high roofs, casement windows, five-foot-wide hallways, 10- and 11-foot ceilings and solid wood doors, says Tom Eldredge, Panama Properties' owner. A turret on the front of the home houses a cigar room done in rich leathers and dark woods, where the homeowner says she likes to go to "solve the world's problems" and where her sons like to "close the door and catch up on brotherly things." The residence doesn't smell like cigars, thanks to a ventilation system in the room that moves smoke from the house, the homeowner says.

The rest of the home isn't so obviously English. You're just as likely to find an array of Moroccan oil pots as you are a subtly placed antique Thai teapot, seven-foot Buddha, turtle shell table or Picasso-esque piece of modern art that has been snapped up on one of the couple's worldwide jaunts. A bold contemporary painting "on paper so fine, you could rip it" hangs over the couple's bed, the homeowner says, adding





that she put a small piece of the artwork in her bedside drawer so she could show guests how thin the paper was. And though the couple doesn't entertain often, they could; they've got a kitchen in their basement that can be used for catering, a massage room, a wine cellar that can store up to 2,000 bottles and a backyard pool area.

One of the homeowner's favorite rooms is her office, which Perez says was one of the most challenging rooms to design.

"It's very modern, which is not something she normally likes, Perez says. "So I gave it a very Asian feel, and now she loves it."

With flourishes like these, it's little wonder the couple already has its share of special memories.

"The funniest thing about this house is that we had one son's wedding reception here," the homeowner says. "Once we got the video from the photographer we hired, we laughed because it was full of pictures of the house and the bride and groom were maybe in there twice. We still get tickled about that." ■