

BEFORE & AFTER

# A LABOR OF LOVE

A VIVACIOUS OVERHAUL  
OF ENTREPRENEUR  
BAILEY MCCARTHY'S  
TEXAS HOME

1. Hard lessons from a two-year mega reno
2. How to integrate a 1960s addition into a historic home
3. The lacquer disaster
4. Why it's OK to wait for inspiration to strike

To loosen up the too-formal living room (inset) in her Houston home, Bailey McCarthy injected playfulness with curtains in a GP & J Baker fabric, a custom sofa in a Scalamantré stripe, 1950s Italian glass lamps from Jan Showers, and vintage elephant garden stools turned accent tables. Vintage Thomasville coffee table. Photograph by Nick Knight. Rug, Stark. Walls, Benjamin Moore's Chantilly Lace.

BEFORE







## On a Venn diagram, this house would be the spot where extroverted overlaps with elegant.

**BAILEY MCCARTHY:** That's where I was aiming! It's a 1930s Colonial with a classic floor plan: entry and living room on the right, dining room on the left. I wanted the rooms to echo the home's traditional character while also feeling fresh and fun. We have a five-year-old daughter and a three-year-old son, so it couldn't be stuffy. I chose vibrant hues and whimsical patterns. The dining room's fantastical wallpaper resembles a magical jungle in a children's fairy tale. That pattern established the home's style and palette of powder blues, moody greens, and orangey reds with pops of pink.

**KATHLEEN RENDA:** You're a cheerleader for color, as customers of your Biscuit Home bedding line and Houston shop well know. What drives that enthusiasm?

Nature plus nurture. I'm hardwired to prefer vivid hues. Growing up, I watched old-school musicals with elaborate sets like *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*—very psychedelic! Movies had a huge impact on me. I also don't follow rules and have some kooky design inclinations. For example, my living room has a built-in bar in peacock blue, lemon-yellow chairs, and lavender lamps.

**Colorful, indeed. But then why paint the living room walls plain white?**

Anything else would have distracted from the room's artwork—a large-scale photograph of a floral bouquet that is literally dripping with color. Of course, me being me, I couldn't do just white walls, so I had them lacquered to a high sheen, along with the ceiling, to reflect the room's vibrant hues. Getting that shine just right is a multistep process, and I confess it didn't go as planned. I could tell during the renovation that the lacquer wasn't being applied correctly, but I was distracted by everything else that was happening and didn't speak up. After we moved in, the paint started chipping and it had to be totally redone: a hard lesson learned.

**How was the rest of the remodel?**

Like death by a thousand paper cuts. It took two-and-a-half years! When we bought the house, it was a complete time capsule. In its life, there had been only two previous owners, and everything

needed updating, from wiring to duct-work and insulation. I kept the first floor mostly as is but gutted the kitchen. Upstairs, the biggest change was that we doubled the size of the master bathroom. The renovation took forever, but it allowed us to customize every inch. This is our fourth and final home, and I wanted it to be the culmination of all the best ideas I've tried over the years, plus some curveballs.

**Like the gold tiles in the master bathroom?**

I've always loved those glass gold-leaf tiles—they are so Liberace!—but this is the first time I've ever had a space that's worthy of their blinged-out glam. By borrowing some square footage from the master bedroom, I was able to create a showstopper bath. Calacatta Gold marble and an antique Murano glass chandelier upped the ante. It may not be subtle but, as Diana Vreeland once said, "we all need a splash of bad taste."

**What was your strategy in the now-smaller master bedroom?**

My buzzword was *slaxy*—a combination of sleek and sexy. Any adornments are kept to a minimum. Most of the drama comes from an olive silk wallpaper that's both subtle and rich. Aside from the metallic thread woven into the linen, the upholstered headboard is subdued, because I like to constantly change up the overall look with bedding from my shop. My current favorite is one of our floral patterns, which

features painterly green blossoms that play off the wall color.

**Any cautionary tales about mixing full-tilt colors and patterns?**

Don't attempt it when your creativity is at a low ebb. It's better to just paint it all white and wait for inspiration—though I admit that I didn't initially heed my own



**ABOVE:** In the kitchen, a brass counter and hardware gleam against cabinetry and Sub-Zero refrigerator panels in Benjamin Moore's Onyx. Marble backsplash, Walker Zanger. **OPPOSITE:** Once bland and straitlaced (inset), the dining room now bursts with high-octane design, from the Zuber wallpaper to the molding's Pantone shade of Piquant Green. Chandelier, Circa Lighting.





Heeding the advice of architect William Curtis, McCarthy gave the home's ungainly 1960s addition (inset) a more traditional feel by replacing dated sliding doors and plain walls with triple-hung windows and white-oak millwork. Sofa in a Brunshwig & Fils cotton. Ottoman, Oscar de la Renta for Lee Jofa. Ceiling lights, Serge Mouille. **ABOVE LEFT:** The '70s amber-glass tulip table with swivel chairs, found on 1stdibs, is the family's favorite spot for playing board games. **BELOW LEFT:** The mirrored bar—lacquered in Benjamin Moore's Summer Nights, embellished with Sandberg's Raphaël wallpaper, and topped with a white-onyx counter—"is a little jewel-box moment," McCarthy says.

**BEFORE**







The designer finally got a chance to use Davlin gold-leaf glass tiles from Ann Sacks in her newly enlarged master bathroom. Freestanding Waterworks Claremont tub. Sconce, the Urban Electric Co. **ABOVE RIGHT:** In the bedroom of her young daughter, Grace, McCarthy conjures a “full-on princess fantasy” with a bed canopy in a Designers Guild floral. Bedding and pouf, Biscuit Home. Walls, Farrow & Ball’s Lulworth Blue. **BELOW RIGHT:** In son Harry’s bedroom, an Andy Warhol print of General Custer is teamed with striped Cole & Son wallpaper.







**THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** The master bedroom's silk Donghia wallcovering anchors a Damien Hirst print and chairs in Scalamandre's Leopardo; bed in Osborne & Little's Glimmer; bedding, Biscuit Home; nightstands, Hickory Chair; rug, Stark. Bailey McCarthy. Zoffany wallpaper frames a niche in the guest bedroom; Antoinette bed, Chaddock. **OPPOSITE:** Previously, the backyard (inset) didn't take advantage of the 80-year-old oak's shade. Now, pieces from Celerie Kemble's Lane Venture collection furnish a new flagstone patio. **FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES**

