

INTERIORS[®]

ART IN DESIGN



ALL THE RIGHT MOVES

INTERIOR DESIGN: JOSHUA RICE

TEXT: ABIGAIL STONE

PHOTOGRAPHY: CODY ULRICH







The partnership between interior designer and client is an exercise in trust. That's especially true when the homeowners are looking for something out of the ordinary. "It was more traditional than our taste generally runs," says the wife of the Dallas home. "We wanted a more modern aesthetic." Their due diligence led them to Joshua Rice. "He jumped out as being the right fit," she remembers. "We wanted a little bit of an edge," adds the husband, "but also something that felt timeless." It would also need to withstand the antics of two preteen boys: "We didn't want to lose sleep over spilled oatmeal."

"They wanted something unique," says Rice, a self-described "furniture nerd" who sees every project as an opportunity to test himself. "I don't want a design aficionado to come in and have seen it all before," he says. Instead he prefers to commission unique pieces from artisans he often discovers through Instagram. "When I see something that catches my eye, I'll file it away," he says. "Then, once I've used it, I try not to repeat myself. It's more fun for me and it's more rewarding for the client."

His manifesto is immediately revealed at the front entry. "We were looking for something spectacular," Rice says. A white oak cabinet with oversize lift-and-drop latches by Stefan White, who had first caught Rice's eye as a graduate student, is topped with a brass and marble bowl by Canadian craftsman Randall Zieber. "I wanted a cool, interesting bowl and he came back with one," Rice says. A 3-D wall sculpture by Brooklyn-based artist Leonardo Drew completes the triptych. Rice balances these custom works with vintage items from atypical names. In the home's main foyer, dominated by a majestic stone staircase, a lounge chair and footstools by Sven Ellekaer and tables by Rodolfo Dordoni are grouped with a rare Preben Fabricius & Jørgen Kastholm hanging sofa upholstered in aubergine leather and two paintings by Texas minimalist Otis Jones. Opposite, they're teamed with a bespoke Jequitibá wood screen from Sao Paulo-based Andrea Macruz. The curvaceous piece, which mimics the chair's winding back, helps bring the cavernous room down to size, a quandary with which Rice is familiar. "Because I'm fortunate enough to work on large projects, I often run into the issue of too much space," Rice says. Carving intimacy out of the substantial rooms is a key component of his work."

A typical grid furniture placement doesn't work in rooms this size," says Rice. "It took a lot of thought to come up with a viable plan." In the living room, that meant breaking the room into two distinct but complementary areas. One, near the fireplace, links a pair of Ib Kofod-Larsen Adam lounge chairs with an aluminum coffee table by Douglas Fanning. The sculptural grouping is balanced by two Jørgen Kastholm lounge chairs, a Van Rossum coffee table and a Jader Almeida bench whose Swiss caning finds its echo in the Tacchini screen across the room. Curved, sinuous shapes and tactile materials convey warmth, while art that invites closer inspection—including the intricate Brie Ruais ceramic sculpture above the fireplace, Amélie Bouvier's "Pickerings Harem" series that fills the niche and five Nicholas Holmes sculptures on the frosted glass sideboard—also help shrink the room's girth.

Rice flexed these tools throughout the home. In the dining room, an immense walnut table with a bronze base from Jeff Martin Joinery helps temper the large room, which also holds a rush-fronted cabinet by Emmemobili, a modern kilim, and Marie Eklund's carved wooden spoon collection. Light is another device Rice employs to add warmth, orchestrating the interplay of artificial fixtures and diffused natural light. The dining room's playful alabaster drops work in concert with a frosted glass cabinet. In the living room, the custom Austere chandelier is abetted by window sheers and the Glas Italia credenza; in the breakfast room, the sheers are paired with Brendan Ravenhill pendants dangling over a Charlotte Perriand table; in the family room, filtered light and pale thick materials put the spotlight on Jessica Drenk's striking *Bibliophylum*, carved from books saturated in wax. The office's cobalt blue walls and gray carpet came with the house; in fact, Rice designed the room so they could be easily swapped out. Instead, he discovered that the resulting tension between traditional and modern—a thread which runs throughout the home—served to amplify the beauty of the spare and compelling contemporary pieces—here headlined by an Osvaldo Borsani desk and Sven Ivar Dysthe armchairs. "It's now one of my favorite rooms," Rice confesses. The husband agrees: "More than just pretty, it functions as a great office and shared space," adding, "I'd anticipated only using it on the weekend. But I just love it."

In fact, the entire home proved its worth during lockdown. "We use more rooms now that we're here so much, and discovered that they can function well in different ways," the husband says. The primary bedroom is a particular favorite, with thoughtful touches—terracotta inserts on a custom cabinet that absorb the beads of moisture on a bedside glass of water; Wittman's Palais lounge in a configuration that supports the couple's love of reading together in the morning; and Marcin Rusak's black resin table inset with flowers, slung low to accommodate the family's puzzle and game nights—that underscore this as a sanctuary. "Josh is so exacting that we never worried," says the husband. "We knew it was going to be good."

■ Joshua Rice Design, joshuaricedesign.com

