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PaperCity

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**TURN THAT
FROWN
UPSIDE
DOWN!**

**JOYOUS
SPRING Fashion**

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PaperCity **House**

Decorator

KATIE STASSI

**Spins the Color Wheel
in a '30s House**

DESIGN DIARY:

**Spring's
Picker-Uppers**

POWER OF A FLOWER. PHOTOGRAPHY GRAY SCOTT. STYLING, FASHION EDITOR KATE ALLEN STUKENBERG. OSCAR DE LA RENTA SUMMER SILK FAILLE STRAPLESS GOWN WITH RUCHED SWEETHEART NECKLINE AND TRAIN \$7,490. AT NEIMAN MARCUS. HAIR WESLEY D'NEARA FOR THE WALL GROUP. MAKEUP KATEY DENNO FOR THE WALL GROUP. MODEL GABRIELLA PLEGGENKURLE FOR NY MODELS. PHOTO ASSISTANTS JOE PELLEGRINO, KYLE GARSON AND ANDY LIN. FASHION ASSISTANT CAMERON COOPER.

FUCHSIA, LILAC AND VERVE

MIX IT UP

Decorator **Katie Stassi** undertakes a sweeping renovation in River Oaks for a growing young family.



Decorator
Katie Stassi



BY LAURANN CLARIDGE.
PHOTOGRAPHY JACK THOMPSON.
PORTRAIT JENNY ANTILL.
INTERIOR DESIGN KATIE STASSI.

Talk about a whirlwind summer (and then some). A couple of years ago, decorator Katie Stassi of Stassi Design was hired by a harried young couple house-hunting for a suitable place to raise their growing brood. With their second child due in just weeks, they stumbled upon a charming colonial revival with white clapboards and sweet seafoam-hued shutters that would fit the bill perfectly ... after a few tweaks. Before you could say "extensive renovation," they snatched up the covetable property, which was situated on one of the few "greens" in River Oaks — one of five houses developed in the 1930s encircling an expansive, U-shaped lawn.

The interior was dark, however, and the layout choppy, so the couple definitely had their work cut out for them. But they also had connections to one of the most talented designers around.

The mother-to-be had been friends with Katie Stassi since college. The two had kept in touch for 20 years, frequently calling one another to chat about upholstery and paint colors, children and preschool. Recognizing the mighty project her friend had undertaken, Stassi stepped up to help. She brought her ideas to the hospital right after the birth of the homeowners' son. The young mother calls the visit — and all that followed — "the best baby gift anyone ever gave me." Stassi arrived with a sample of gray-and-pink David Hicks wallpaper, a piece of bleached wood flooring, Carrara marble, paint chips, swatches of gray shantung silk and

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lavender linen, and valuable advice: "This is how you get started. This is the direction you should consider. This is your focus."

And consider it she did. Within days, the two women started a renovation that transformed the dark house into a light-filled, somewhat feminine abode that's inviting for adults and children alike. The predominantly white interiors are softened by slipcovered furniture and a dash of pink and lavender. The result even suited her husband, who grew up in interiors styled by the great Mario Buatta.

The kitchen, once nearly windowless, was given three windows, sleek new appliances and marble countertops. Built-in bookcases and cabinets replaced old knotty-pine paneling in the family room, and a new wall of French doors bathed the room with sunlight. Throughout the first level, the hardwood floors were bleached, while the bathrooms were updated, upstairs and down. Every surface that would hold paint was swathed with a fresh, glossy new coat.

In the midst of all this, Stassi relocated from Houston to her hometown of New Orleans. Did the project come to a screeching halt? Not a chance. Instead, a flurry of e-mails hit her inbox, and frequent phone conversations became consultations. "I think of myself as more of a director," Stassi says. "I know my friend's personality, her style ... I know her husband as well. What is truly fun for me is to reflect who they are. They gave me all their many, many, many ideas, and I edited them down. I'm very good at simplifying and coming up with the game plan. I can go into a house, size up the situation and give someone direction on where and what to do next."

The homeowners' children are now of an age when curiosity can get the best of them — not to mention the best of fine bone china and sterling — but that doesn't deter their parents from displaying family heirlooms throughout the house. The children break them, and the adults superglue them back together again. There is a refreshing, carefree living style where good upholstery slipcovered in white cotton duck is easily washed when artistic inspiration prompts Magic Marker scribbles — all of which proves that a house decorated with verve is ageless.



What is truly fun
for me is to reflect
who *they* are

— decorator Katie Stassi



Top: Reproduction American dining table from Carl Moore Antiques. Crystal glass chandelier was an Internet find, while the porringers, candlesticks and silver pieces are family heirlooms. Slipcovered Parsons-style dining chairs from the Ballard Designs catalog. Cashmere throw from A Bontik. Orchids from Orchard Express.

Above: In the family room, a West Elm lamp with yellow shade from Pottery Barn. Bamboo tray from William-Wayne & Co., New York. Vintage silver mist julep cups and baby cups are family heirlooms. Bird of paradise painting by Katherine Phelps.

Left: The moveable kitchen island on wheels, like the rest of the countertops, was covered with Carrara marble by Terraco Stone. Cabinets and walls throughout the house are painted in the hue Super White by Benjamin Moore.





Above: In the family room, a pair of swivel chairs from an estate sale in San Francisco take on another life slipcovered in white cotton duck. Grosgrain-ribbon-covered pillows from Pottery Barn. The early American gating table belonged to the owner's grandmother. Chinese reproduction vases from William-Wayne & Co., New York, with tulips from Plants 'n' Petals. The painting above the fireplace depicts the Harbour Island church where the couple married. Croquet set from The Guild Shop of St. John the Divine. Antique apothecary jars from France. Fireplace surround by Terrace Stone.

Right: In the master bath, a West Elm Parsons desk is repurposed as a dressing table. J. Gould etchings and assorted prints were found through the couple's travels. The monogrammed silver vanity set belonged to the owner's grandmother. Mother-of-pearl jewelry box from William-Wayne, New York.

Below: In the living room, French Louis Philippe four-drawer commode with marble top from Tara Shaw Ltd. The gilded mirror was found at a flea market in New York. Marchew collection lamp. The silver candy dish and crystal matchbox and lighters are a mix of vintage and new. Crystal decanter and glasses from Baccarat.

