

EDITORIAL



The Texas Home. Sounds great, but is there such a thing? Are there any characteristics of our homes that tell us we are in Texas, instead of New England or California or Minneapolis?

Well, yes and no. When we asked designers throughout the state what (if anything) is unique about homes in Texas, two points came across loud and clear.

First, there is no single style or period that distinctively says, "I'm from Texas." "In New England you have Cape Cods, in New Orleans you find wrought iron facades, and so on," says designer Jim Bradley of Dallas. "But in Texas . . . well, not much — or too much — comes to mind. Actually, I think the most interesting thing about Texas homes is the way we borrow from everywhere, from Mexico to France."

Which brings us to point number two: in a generally eclectic era of home design, the state's designers feel that Texas homes are just about the most varied of the lot.

"There's more mixing of styles and periods here than anywhere else in the country," says interior designer Marguerite Green, whose aunt was Dallas' first interior designer. "In the East and Deep South, people are very careful to be fashionable. Here, fashion just doesn't mean that much. Texans insist on liking what they have and having what they like. Sometimes styles get blurred, but it's exciting."

Dallas designer Jerry Oden took the point a little further. "We're just more eclectic than other areas of the country. Or perhaps I should say 'more collected.' Most of the homes I see are furnished with items the owners have acquired over the years, through travel, antique hunting and inheritance. Consequently, you find very little *pure* style of any kind here, Texan or otherwise."

What do you find? Perhaps just the beginning of a Texas style, as the old and new, regional and international come together in a fresh mix.

First, our collections. "People in Texas travel a lot and have extremely varied collections, everything from pre-Columbian art to Chinese porcelain," says Fort Worth's Joe Minton. "Many people will start out collecting haphazardly, then get interested in a field, and go on to become quite knowledgeable. To my thinking, art is now on a higher level here than in other parts of the country. Sure, some people buy purely for decorative value, but we have many clients with fabulous collections, especially in 20th-century art."

Minton adds, however, that though our homes are furnished with more varied and finer objects than ever before, the overall feeling is paradoxically less "arty." "We are seeing so much log and wood furniture, wicker, bleached wood and sisal floors, and lots of desert colors. The strongest trend in Texas is toward natural materials."

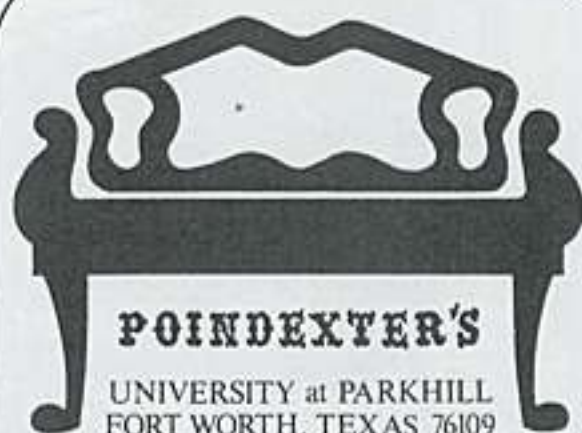
Ms. Green agrees, "People in Texas prefer terra cotta, brick and wood floor coverings to carpet, which is part of our Western tradition. Even when we use formal things, we use them in an informal manner."

Small wonder, then, that the furnishings of the past — the Texas past — are newly cherished. "More and more Texans are interested in Texas antiques, instead of the New England, Early American version," says Joe Minton. "Texas antiques work especially well in ranch houses, because they mix with contemporary, wicker, and natural materials. This interest has soared in the last year, especially — Texas antiques are rising in value and getting very hard to find."

And our colors. Several designers thought our colors were quite our own. "The light is special down here. Everything looks brighter," says Ms. Green. "The most frequently used colors are earth tones and sunny shades," adds designer Jerry Oden. "You don't see as many plums and aubergines here as in the East."

Well, it's only a beginning — but an exciting one, we think. If it's still too early to capture the idea of a Texas home, at least we have good reason to suspect there is such a creature, evolving slowly in the midst of an unprecedented period of blending, borrowing and new ideas in design. For now, maybe we should just let the question rest, sit back, and enjoy the variety.

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