

# Great Style

## DESIGNERS AT HOME

**Expert Ideas and Inspiration**  
from Jamie Drake, Anouska Hempel, Waldo Fernandez, and More

**PLUS**  
Renovation Essentials  
The Best of Charleston



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In the Kansas City, Missouri, living room of Hallmark Cards visual-merchandising executive David Jimenez (opposite), a vintage flokati softens the wood floor; the folding screen is by Arteriors, the suzani throw pillows are by Jayson Home, and the latticework chair is a 1940s Lorin Jackson design for Grosfeld House. For details see Sources.



# MIX MASTER

In a historic Kansas City building, Hallmark Cards executive David Jimenez assembles a casually chic apartment that's brimming with flair

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STYLED BY HOWARD CHRISTIAN



New York has the Dakota, London has Albany, and Los Angeles has the El Royale. In Kansas City, Missouri, an exceptional example of elegant apartment living from days gone by is the Sophian Plaza, a 1923 Beaux Arts landmark ornamented with neoclassical urns and vigorous rustication. For years, though, its charms managed to escape the notice of David Jimenez, a West Coast transplant and the vice president of visual merchandising and store design at Hallmark Cards, which is based in Kansas City. But when he began thinking about moving out of another neighborhood in the Midwestern metropolis, a friend suggested he venture over to Warwick Boulevard for a look at the Sophian. "My heart started racing when I pulled up," Jimenez recalls. "Then I walked in and saw the lobby's grand fireplace, marble floor, and coffered ceiling—my knees went weak."

Not that his residence at the time was lacking in sophistication. After five years of caring for a three-story Georgian Revival house in the historic Hyde





Clockwise from above: A doorway is framed by Restoration Hardware linen curtains customized with a border from M&J Trimming. In the library, a Williams-Sonoma Home daybed accesses two seating areas; the polished-nickel floor lamp, at right, and the brown wall paint are both by Restoration Hardware. The chesterfield sofa is by Ralph Lauren Home.







**Above:** A sunburst mirror gleams in the dining room. **Opposite, clockwise from top left:** The pedestal dining table is by Restoration Hardware, the folding screen is vintage, and the drawings are by S. Holinko. The kitchen is outfitted with custom Restoration Hardware cabinetry; the lantern is by Williams-Sonoma Home, and the sink fittings are by Grohe. In the dressing room, a '60s chandelier hangs above a Danish-modern chair; the rug is by Jonathan Adler. A Phillip Jeffries grass cloth lines the music closet.

Park area, however, Jimenez was ready for a change. "I was looking for everything I enjoyed in that sprawling place but in a home that was more compact," he explains. Eventually a two-bedroom apartment in the Sophian, replete with original applied moldings that were intended to mimic paneling, came on the market, and he snapped it up. In the seven-month renovation that followed, the baths were modernized, and the maid's quarters became a peacock-blue dressing room. The outmoded kitchen was reborn as a sunny chamber with thick marble counters and glass-front cabinets. "I wanted a kitchen that was happy and bright," says Jimenez, who is an energetic cook and ingenious host. Parties are frequently on the agenda, so he smartly transformed the apartment's former service entrance into a second bar that opens onto the common hall he shares with his neighbors. That way, Jimenez says, "guests can pick up a cocktail upon exiting the elevator."

A charming can-do attitude has been part of the Bronx-born-and-raised designer's persona since he was a teenager. Just after graduating high school, Jimenez decided to look for some work before heading off to college. He walked into a Gap store in Manhattan

and was hired for a sales position on the spot. "The store was young and fun," he says, "and, honestly, the discount was appealing." Within six years Jimenez went from folding T-shirts to being the chain's visual-merchandising manager, based in San Francisco and overseeing a thousand stores. While he was living in California, he helped decorate a friend's house, which caught the eye of an executive at Pottery Barn and led to a position with that company, followed by another at Restoration Hardware. In 2005 Jimenez was hired by Hallmark, and despite his initial reservations about relocating to Kansas City, he has come to admire its "strong arts community, terrific restaurants, and great antiques dealers." These days, home design is an extra-curricular pursuit, but it remains a passion. "I was a kid who liked rearranging my parents' living room, which had blue shag carpeting—and what I did made them so happy," Jimenez says. "I've always been sensitive to the impact of space and environment and mood."

That sensitivity is reflected in the designer's apartment, where the living room does have a shag carpet—actually a sumptuous vintage flokati—the walls are enriched with neutral but saturated colors, and the lamps are equipped with low-watt bulbs that cast a gentle cocktail-party glow. ("At the age of six," he says, "I was already cringing at the brightness of the overhead lights in my grandmother's house.") Walls painted charcoal, chocolate, and chinchilla-gray provide soothing backdrops for black-and-white photography and colorful vintage finds, such as an emerald-green lamp and a brilliant aqua folding screen, both in the dining room. Some items in the apartment have provenances that delight Jimenez—the stately mantel in the living room was salvaged from the storied Creighton mansion in Omaha, Nebraska, and a black-lacquer chest of drawers gracing the dressing room was designed in the 1950s by the American decorator Dorothy Draper—but he says his collecting is really all about "finding works I connect with."

One day, for instance, he came across the antiques shop of popular Kansas City dealer Christopher Filley and picked up a striking charcoal drawing of a woman, signed by a little-known artist. Filley, spotting his interest, casually said, "Oh, I have a few of those lying around." A search through six portfolios later, Jimenez was the proud owner of 15 pieces by the same hand, most of which now hang salon-style in the dining room. Many of Jimenez's belongings have similarly serendipitous histories. It's decorating driven by the thrill of the chase. "I may not know where something is going to go," he says, "but when I bring it home, it just lands." □







*Clockwise from above:* A Richard Avedon image and a Williams-Sonoma Home sconce are mounted above a '50s chair in the master bedroom. The master bath contains shower fittings and towels by Restoration Hardware. A chandelier by Williams-Sonoma Home overlooks the master bedroom; the folding screen and sofa are vintage, the herringbone wool blanket is by Ralph Lauren Home, and the velvet curtains are by Restoration Hardware.

