

In the living room of David Jimenez's home, a vintage flokati softens the wooden floor. A folding screen, black-and-white artwork, Suzani throw pillows and a 1940s-style latticework chair add graphic punch to the space

# SOFT LANDING

FEEL-GOOD FABRICS, SOFT LIGHTING AND SOOTHING COLOURS ARE A RECIPE FOR AN ULTRA-WELCOMING AND LAYERED HOME

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An exceptional example of elegant apartment living from days gone by, the Sophian Plaza in Kansas City is a 1923 Beaux-Arts landmark ornamented with neoclassical urns and vigorous rustication. For David Jimenez, the vice president of visual merchandising and store design at Hallmark Cards, it was love at first sight. 'My heart started racing the first time 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.'

After five years of caring for a three-story Georgian Revival house in a historic area, 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 Plaza, replete with original



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT A sunburst mirror in the dining room offsets the dark-painted wall; in the library, tones of toffee and chocolate create warmth. A daybed is the midpoint between two seating areas and the Chesterfield sofa is by Ralph Lauren Home; the blue vintage screen and wall of drawings create an intimate corner by the table; homeowner David Jimenez

applied mouldings, came on the market, and he snapped it up.

In the seven-month renovation that followed, the baths were modernised, the maid's quarters became a peacock-blue dressing room and 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 neighbours. That way, Jimenez says, 'guests can pick up a cocktail upon exiting the elevator'.

A charming can-do attitude has been part of the designer's persona since he was a teenager. Just after graduating from 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. While 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.

These days home design is an extra-curricular pursuit, but 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 has a shag carpet – actually a vintage flokati – the walls are enriched with neutral but saturated colours and the lamps are equipped with low-watt bulbs that cast a gentle cocktail-party glow. 'At the age of six I was already cringing at the brightness of the overhead lights in my grandmother's house,' says Jimenez. Walls painted chinchilla-grey, charcoal and chocolate provide soothing backdrops

for black-and-white photography and colourful vintage finds, such as an emerald-green lamp and an 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 a Nebraska mansion, the 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 an antiques shop and picked up a striking

charcoal drawing of a woman, signed by a little-known artist. The dealer, 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.'

• David Jimenez @ www.djimenez.com

**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT**  
A chandelier overlooks the master bedroom where a vintage folding screen and sofa offer a biscuit-coloured complement to the grey palette of the walls, carpeting and velvet curtains. The herringbone wool blanket is by Ralph Lauren Home; a Richard Avedon and scone hang above a 1950s chair; the master bathroom contains timeless fittings; a doorway is softened by a frame of linen curtains





In this cosily chic apartment, layers of soft textures, muted colours and classic pieces come together in a warm and welcoming way



UPHOLSTERED LEATHER-AND-MAHOGANY ARMCHAIR, R11 900, PLACE DIRECT



PARADISE ROAD 'NIRVANA' FABRIC IN FERN GREEN, R681 PER METRE, ST LEGER & VINEY



CAST-IRON TABLE, R5 200, TAKE IT FOR GRANTED

MAVROMAC 'LEOPARD' CUSHION, R700, JAB LOUW ANTIQUES



CONVEX METAL 'FEATHERS' MIRROR, R840, CÉCILE & BOYD'S



PORCELAIN GINGER JAR, R1 600, NORICK INTERIORS



UPHOLSTERED MOHAIR VELOUR DAYBED, PRICE ON APPLICATION (EXCLUDING FABRIC), QUALITY INTERIORS

COTTON 'ZIGZAG' DHURRY IN PINK, BLACK AND WHITE, R10 970 (3MX4M), THE GATEHOUSE AT MAVROMAC



ORIGINAL CHARCOAL DRAWING, R7 000 (INCLUDING FRAME), ARTEFACT



VINTAGE MARBLE LAMP BASE, R1 200 PER PAIR, O.L.I.V.E

STEEL 'LA MESSA' CHANDELIER WITH SHADES, R16 985, CS HOME



RALPH LAUREN 'CORNWALL' CHESTERFIELD SOFA, FROM R75 000, TEMPLARS INTERIORS

FROM TOP: RUBELLI '762 OMBRA' FABRIC IN 21 RUBINO, R1 826 PER METRE, MAVROMAC; UV-PRO INSIDE OUT 'LEISURE' FABRIC IN 025-ONYX, R893.50 PER METRE, HOME FABRICS



'ANTIBES' DINING TABLE WITH ELM-WOOD TOP, R14 995, BLOCK & CHISEL

DECORATIVE TIMBER SCREEN, R16 500, HEAD INTERIORS



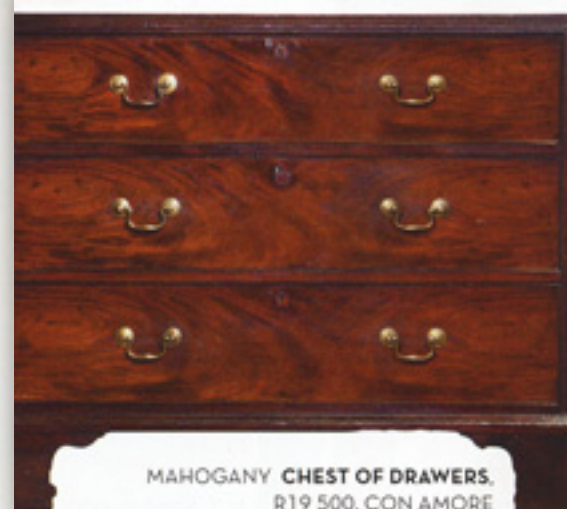
LARGE GLAZED CERAMIC URN, R850, JAB LOUW ANTIQUES



UPHOLSTERED 'BODINE' ARMCHAIR, R3 995, BLOCK & CHISEL



MAHOGANY CHEST OF DRAWERS, R19 500, CON AMORE



ANTIQUE SILVER-PLATED CANDLESTICKS, FROM R2 000, CON AMORE



'GREEK KEY BRAID' TRIMMING, R167 PER METRE, CASTELLANO BELTRAME



FROM TOP: DULUX '30BB 16/031'; PLASCON 'LIGHT ANTHILL 07-E2-2' AND PLASCON 'UNDERGROUND 01-E1-1' PAINTS, FROM R130 PER LITRE EACH, ALL BUILDERS WAREHOUSE

PLASCON 'SPORTY BLUE B2-A1-2' PAINT, R170 PER LITRE, BUILDERS WAREHOUSE



RAYON 'SHAGGY' RUG, FROM R4 860, PACO RUGS For stockists' details, see page 142

