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HOME & DESIGN



A VINEYARD OIL PAINTING is the jumping-off point for a unifying color scheme. And setting the chaise sofa in the middle of the room helps promote flow. Photographs by AMY BARTLAM

HOME OF THE TIMES

Texas designer ties it together

By CAROL A. CROTTA

The 27-year-old bachelor lawyer buying his first house, a 1,730-square-foot single-story home in Studio City, knew immediately whom to call to rework its interior: Meredith Ellis, designer for his parents' homes in Studio City and Malibu.

"He told me then," says Ellis, whose firm, Meredith Ellis Design, is based in Austin, Texas. "If I can ever buy a house, I want you to do it."

She set out to make Sam Wolf's three-bedroom, two-bath home traditional yet unique. "He didn't want it to feel decorated. He wanted to be able to put his feet up on a sectional sofa and watch TV," so she hung a flat-screen TV over the mantel, she says. "He works a lot at home, so his office was very important. I had to be able to hang his L.A. Lakers jersey and photos."

Ellis envisioned a cottage, "California but not coastal," with dark wood floors, leather and bamboo, light walls and consistent hits of color to pop against those walls. "I wanted to use a lot of restraint, and that, I think, comes through," Ellis says.

Her biggest challenge, she



WHEN IT CAME to making his first home special, lawyer Sam Wolf called Meredith Ellis, who had worked with his parents.

found, was the floor plan that had living room, kitchen, dining room and study wrapping around a hearth fireplace.

"We wanted each space to have its own identity, but it had to work together as well," she says. To create a clear path from the front door, Ellis set the sizable chaise sofa in the middle of the room, enabling

easy conversation from living room to kitchen and dining room.

With a \$40,000 budget, Ellis shopped for the major pieces from catalogs, filling in with flea market and pricier antique shop finds from Austin and Los Angeles. The key for Ellis was to determine with her client when to spend for something special that he would carry forward



AN INEXPENSIVE table pairs with quality rush chairs.

in his life and when online shopping would do. The dining table, for example, came from Room and Board, but the rush chairs from Rexford House were an investment.

The jumping-off point for the unifying color scheme was a Dutch Touch oil painting of a vineyard in clear grass green, which originally had been intended for his parents'

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Go online to see more of the Studio City home's design and more of Christy Matson's writings.

Malibu condo — "so clean, so fresh, so pretty," Ellis says.

She pulled colors, such as the blue L.A.-sky walls, from the painting and used the green as a touchstone throughout, especially in a series of Peter Dunham designer fabrics for the couch pillows and skirted tablecloth in the study, a carefully chosen luxury.

"The combination of expensive and nonexpensive things that keep everyone guessing is the primary reason I chose you to do my house," her client wrote to Ellis.

"It's about combining," Ellis says. "You can get well-designed pieces from catalogs, but if you mix in a lot of personality and individual taste and vintage pieces and touches of more expensive accessories like designer fabrics, you can make something really beautiful."

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