



CHARLOTTE

HOMES + GARDEN

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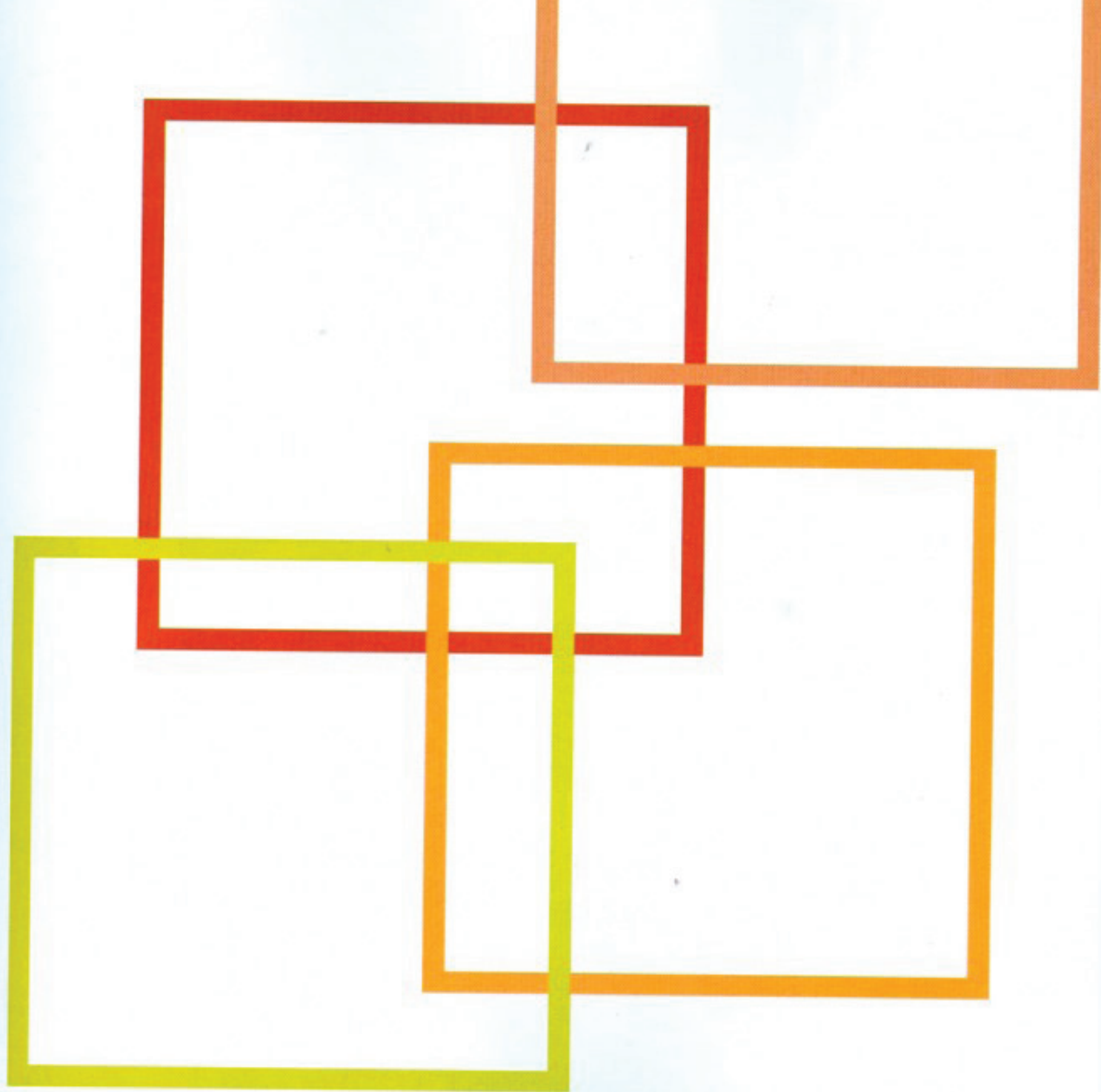
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OUTSIDE THE BOX

Designer Laura Casey took on the challenge of transforming a century-old bungalow into a modern abode

BY JILL WALDBIESER
PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRIS EDWARDS



**BLACK AND WHITE AND
PATTERN ALL OVER**

Beautiful as they are, the canopy of trees in the neighborhood blocked natural light from the front of the house. Adding windows to the dining room was a tremendous help, and enriches the vibrant patterns in the room. The homeowners bought the zebra painting, by an artist in Guanajuato, Mexico, at a gallery in San Miguel de Allende, near where they married and among their favorite travel destinations.



CLEAR AND PRESENT

This page: Previous renovations to the house tacked on a back porch and then enclosed it to create the den-like space just off the kitchen. Casey grouped Lucite-and-steel chairs around a wood table to balance the Greek key-patterned upholstered pieces in the background.

ORANGE COUNTY

Opposite: Neutral colors and natural fibers like Merida sisal rugs and natural weave shades allow the reading room's vibrant orange leather chairs and a painting by Tim Weldon to become what Casey calls "the main event" in the room.



After working for some of Manhattan's top design firms and running her own successful interiors business in Charlotte for years, Laura Casey was no stranger to challenging projects. But when a client who loved color and pattern contacted her in the fall of 2009 about renovating a 100-year-old home in the Elizabeth neighborhood, the traditional-leaning designer knew she was going to have to think outside the bungalow.

"They came to me because they wanted to find a designer who could appreciate the architecture of that style home, but could also appreciate their individual style, which was more eclectic and modern," says Casey. "That was a step out of the box for me. It pushed my design aesthetic, and that made it fun and exciting."

Before they could address décor, though, they had to sort out the space. The 1911 bungalow had two front-facing parlor-style rooms that were never used. "It was basically a no-man's land," says Casey. "They didn't know what to do with that space." After determining how the family liked to spend their downtime, Casey repurposed the two facing rooms into a formal but comfortable living room and a more casual family reading room. The new spaces are complementary in look as well as function, with a consistent palette of colors and materials, and twin wood-burning fireplaces. Casey played up the symmetry by hanging pieces of art above each mantel.

"One of the goals for me was finding the balance for the house," Casey says. "I had to design each room with the other in mind so that there was harmony and a flow." The homeowners' love of color and pattern, and their extensive art collection, made this a bigger-than-usual challenge, but it was one Casey enjoyed. She stuck with lighter shades (and used only low-VOC paint) on the walls, so it wouldn't "feel overwhelming from a color perspective," and made a neutral backdrop for some of the more dramatic artwork. To add color without detracting from

UP IN THE AIR

"The stairs are the core of the house," says Casey. Because they have a direct line of sight to so many of the other rooms, she used a chocolate-brown grasscloth paper on the walls and ran it all the way to the second floor. Lighter-looking pieces like the cowhide chairs help maintain, rather than block, the flow between spaces.





the art or making the room too busy. Casey alternated solids and patterns in the same color family and limited statement-making pieces to one or two per room.

In the reading room, for example, a pair of orange leather armchairs and a matching ottoman coordinate well with the living room's boldly patterned sofa, helping to maintain a visual consistency and flow. "Having a solid and not too much print made for a nice transition," Casey says. "You don't want to go from one pattern to another heavy pattern. This way, it's broken up a little bit."

Balance was also an issue when it came to furnishing the space. Because it was an older home, the rooms "weren't enormous," says Casey. "I didn't want to overcrowd and overpopulate rooms with furniture that would get in the way. I wanted to keep it as open and clean and fresh feeling as I could." Lighter-feeling pieces that had more negative space than heft helped achieve this: open glass shelving, a pair of tubular steel frame chairs, a simple wood coffee table with an X-shaped metal base, Lucite-and-metal seats in the dining area, and lots of airy, crystal chandeliers.

The home stands out in Casey's portfolio of more traditional interiors, and not just visually. It's also a shining example of what she's always telling clients: "The trick is to push yourself slightly out of your comfort zone. Don't be afraid. Experiment, explore, and have fun with it!"



FRESH PRINTS

Top: A bold, screen-printed pattern gives a sofa by the Charles Stewart Company color and flair, and is offset by the room's airier pieces.

ISLAND TIME

Left: The green glass backsplash tile and two Galbraith & Paul drum pendants add a pop of color to the stained butcher block island.