

THE ART OF GEOMETRY

Sharp lines and sinuous curves make up this elegant home in Houston, Texas, where treasured paintings and ceramics share space with bold colours and sculptural furnishings

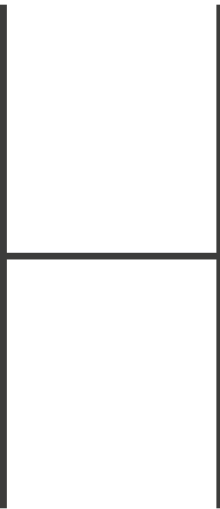
Photography **Julie Soefer** Words **Chae Strathie**



DETAILS

What A modern home designed around a series of courtyards
Where Houston, Texas
Interior design Linda Eyles

Previous pages Linda's bedroom overlooks the outdoor pool – essential for cooling down in humid Houston. The house was designed by Michael Hsu Office of Architecture. **Right** There are distinct outdoor 'rooms' in a courtyard layout. **Below** The raised vegetable planters are tended by Linda's husband, Simon, who is currently growing tomatoes, aubergines, okra and radishes. The landscaping was done by Mike Gibson of Fischer Schalles



ome, they say, is where the heart is. But at Linda Eyles's fabulous house in Texas, it's definitely more a case of home being where the art is. The stunning building is filled with bold, bright and beautiful paintings, sculptures, ceramics and textiles. In fact, in many ways the house itself, along with its contents, is a work of art, testament to the passion that its owner has for design and creativity.

The celebrated interior designer – founder of Houston studio Linda Eyles Design – has no doubts about the importance of art in the home and in life in general. “It’s essential,” she says emphatically. “I think art in a home is what makes people curious, it’s what makes them ask questions. It’s not just, ‘Oh, that’s a pretty painting’ – it’s, ‘Why did you want this one in your house? What made you choose it?’ That then speaks to who that person is. To me, art is the most descriptive layer in a home, and is absolutely crucial.”

Linda and her English husband Simon, a managing partner in the studio, built their home in the historic Houston Heights area of the city. This is actually their third home there, although style-wise it’s a departure for them. “We lived in an older home for about 13 years, then we built an American farmhouse-style house. But it was bigger than we needed, so we decided to downsize. We wanted it to be all on one level so we could think about growing old here.

“We also wanted something completely different, that felt more sculptural. But we still wanted it to be ►



a home – we didn’t want to be avant-garde about it. The round shapes, the unusual window extrusions on the front and the side of the house, and the interesting swooping ceilings in two of the rooms – these all come from that desire to take a more sculptural approach.”

Both inside and out, Linda has created a feast for the eyes and the soul. Every space has artwork, furnishings and fittings that dazzle without overpowering. The home is brave and colourful, yet still incredibly warm and welcoming.

“Our aim was to achieve something contemporary, bright and engaging,” says the designer. “Our previous home was quieter, and we didn’t want to play it safe this time. For instance, in the entry hall, we have a rug with cheetahs on it, and then we have an abstract floral pattern on the walls. I mean, I get it – for a lot of people, that’s going to be way too much. But we were keen to have fun and be playful.”

She has certainly achieved that. Every space is entertaining, in the best possible way. Linda agrees enthusiastically: “The idea of entertaining, whether visually or with guests, is very important. ►



Opposite, top The living/dining room is bursting with eye-catching pieces, such as a Nazar rug by Atelier Février via The Invisible Collection, Moroso’s curving Gogan sofa in Kravet velvet, a chandelier by Trueing Studio and Poliform’s Mad Joker chair and ottoman. **Opposite, bottom** A Kevin Peterson painting sits above the distinctive fireplace made of Nero Marquina marble and brass by James Dawson Design. **This page** The spacious kitchen has custom-built cabinetry, with an Ijen Blue quartzite worktop on the oak island

Right White quartzite worktops and splashbacks stand out against cabinets painted in Benjamin Moore's Knoxville Gray. Dei Grigio Travertine tiles on the floor are overlaid here with an antique rug which Linda purchased 20 years ago from local dealer Pride of Persia. The wall light is the Archipelago sconce from Allied Maker





Opposite, top left A stunning textile piece by Claudy Jongstra hangs above Radnor's Bone Credenza. **Top right** The floor in the shower room is a work of art in itself, made from a mix of onyx with Calacatta and Nero Marquina marbles by Alison Rose at Artistic Tile. **Bottom left** The bright utility room is the ideal backdrop for portraits of Linda's dogs, painted by her friend Kermit Eisenhut. **Bottom right** This bathroom has unusual bubble-shaped taps by Sherle Wagner - a playful contrast with all the straight lines and stripes. **This page** Another view of the shower room with its incredible mosaic floor. The cabinets were custom built of white oak, and the Gilded Cage chandelier is by Fisher Weisman





Above The back entry is home to a custom-made chaise longue covered in Rubelli's vivid green Sun Bear chenille. The artwork is by Texan painter Joan Steinman. **Right** A customised rug by Diane von Furstenberg sets the tone in the entrance hallway. **Far right** The wine cellar has a beautiful glazed door that makes a feature of the bottles inside. Linda and Simon found the glass 'palazzo' next to it in Venice

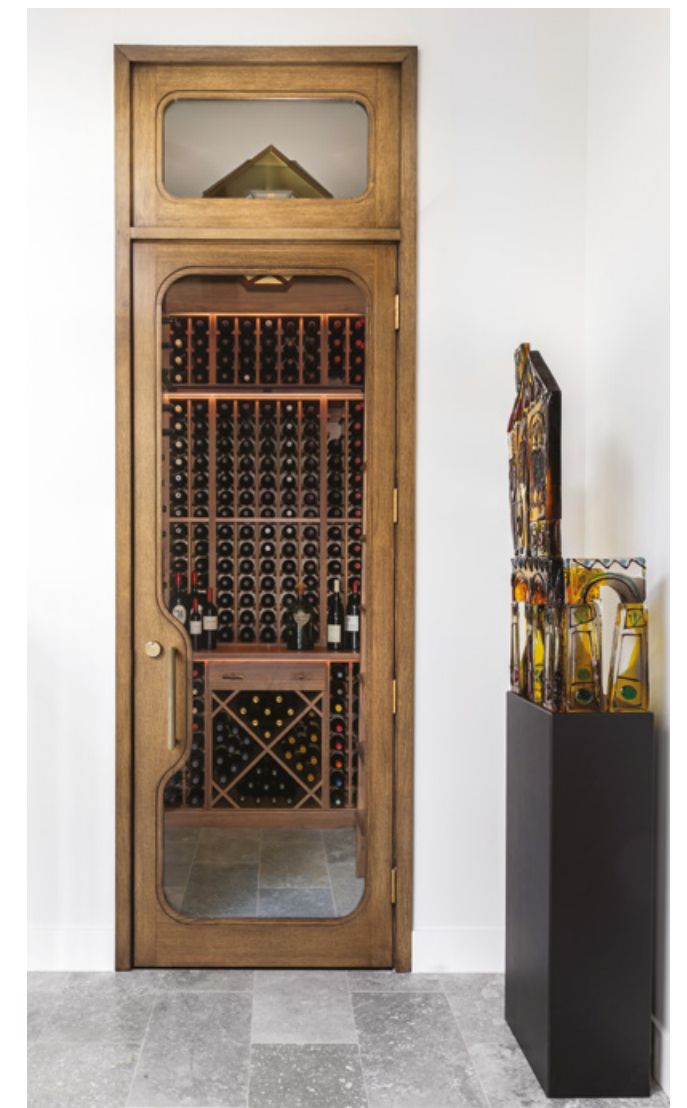


We do entertain a lot, and we have these massive sliding doors that can be opened up to enjoy indoor-outdoor living. Also, our dining area and living room are all one space, and that's been great for entertaining. It's a more casual set-up than we used to have but it gives a great flow."

How did she create a consistent thread that runs through the home, while giving each space its own identity and allowing every room to speak for itself? "The way we most often create flow is through colour," the designer explains. "So, at the entry, we start with this intense topaz shade, and there are greens and some blush tones. Then, as you move from there into Simon's office, for example, he has more subtle greens. In my home office it's blush tones with a warmer topaz."

"As you move into the living room, things get lighter and brighter. You still have a lot of the same values, but we overlay with some blue. At the back of the house, you might get a different proportion of colour, but there's repetition of the colour that leads you through the house."

"Flow also comes down to the layout of the furniture and the way you physically move through the spaces. In this case, some ►



of that happens with the interesting curvature. At the front entry, there's a curve that reveals things slowly, and then you come in and it's like, 'Oh, wow!' You move into the living room, and the ceilings are a bit higher and the brightness in that space pulls you through from one room to another."

With so much to marvel at in this home, it must be almost impossible to choose favourite pieces, but I challenge her nonetheless. "There's a piece of furniture in my primary bedroom that looks like a tree trunk," she says. "It's by Robert Kuo. He's a luminary in the design world, and I've always dreamt of owning something by him. His pieces are sculptural and really interesting and beautiful."

"I also love the black sideboard we have in the living room, Radnor's Bone Credenza. It's so strong and handsome, and

every room needs a little black, I believe. It's rich and soft and very touchable.

"Hanging above it is an artwork that's one of my favourites at the moment. It's by the Dutch artist and textile designer Claudy Jongstra, who has a sheep farm, and that piece is made using wool from her flock. She uses natural dyes – the blue is from woad."

Although the interior is an extravaganza of interest and beauty, Linda's creative touch extends outdoors too. Given Houston's subtropical climate, outdoor living is a big deal. "It all goes back to the concept of it being a courtyard home," she says. "The idea was to create little rooms outdoors. We also have several sculptures that we've collected, so we wanted spaces where these would live. ►

Opposite The outdoor kitchen is fully equipped with a Big Green Egg – Texas is barbecue country, after all. Bold geometric cement tiles (The Big Spin by Clé Tile) on the wall continues the palette of greens and blues. The pendant is the Fora by Bover. **This page** This bedroom has a striking Tbilisi bed by Ironies in a custom colour to match the wall paint (Swanky Gray by Sherwin-Williams). The fabric on the headboard is by Fortuny. **Right** The mudroom is painted in Benjamin Moore's Webster Green. **Bottom right** The tap and concrete pill-shaped sink by Kast brighten up the guest shower room. The blue Chinois Kuai tiles were designed by Robert Kuo, one of Linda's favourite artists, for Ann Sacks





Below Sherman, Linda's beloved three-legged lab, keeps watch over the primary bedroom, which is decorated in Schumacher's Feather Bloom sisal wallpaper, with a large wool-and-silk rug, Primitive by Shirr. The nightstand is a Chinese antique.
Bottom A special piece by artist Robert Kuo takes a spot in the main bedroom

"The kitchen courtyard, particularly, has sort of a Japanese quality to it. As much as I like an English country garden, we didn't want that here. We preferred a much more tailored aesthetic."

It's clear Linda puts an incredible amount of thought into her work – both for herself and her clients. There's a deep intelligence to her approach, as well as a foundation of care and respect that elevates her above the norm. "Being kind, being generous, being gracious to people, respecting those who work on a project – it's all tremendously important," she reflects.

"We have a philosophy here at work that you treat everybody on a job site exactly the same, whether it's the homeowner or the guy who's sweeping the floors at the end of the day. Just being a good person matters so much, and while in terms of interior design there may not seem to be a direct correlation, it does bring me back to the idea of openness, generosity, entertaining and gathering.

"And when you add beautiful things that you can engage with, life is better and more interesting. Life is more beautiful." ■

