

It's in **THE DETAILS**

An interior designer illustrates how a thoughtful makeover can breathe new life into a decade-old home.

BY KRISTIN LUNA. PHOTOS BY LESLEE MITCHELL







It doesn't always take a complete gut job to fully transform an outdated house into a work of art; sometimes, simply giving the care and attention to paint, finishes, and furnishings can make all the difference.

Such was the case for a Brentwood couple who recently purchased an 8,770-square-foot house in the Governors Club, a private golf club community in Williamson County. Much like their previous residence, the couple's new home, built in 2006, would serve as a gathering place for their five adult children and their growing families. What the wife, who asked to remain anonymous, loved about the house was that the downstairs' open floor plan lent itself to entertaining. What she wasn't wild about was the drab color scheme and obsolete furnishings.

"Our previous home was a Hamptons-style house complete with cedar shingles, a stacked fireplace, and cozy cottage feel. So, just for fun, we wanted to do something totally different with our new space," she explains. "The minute I stepped into this house, I was hit with inspiration to transform it into a fun 'Mad Men with a modern glam' feel."

Luckily for the homeowner, she already had a relationship with an interior designer who could do just that: Kendall Simmons, a Chattanooga native who started her career at a pair of New York City design firms, Champion Platt and Jed Johnson Associates, before launching Kendall

Color palette: The designer admits that it's often hard to commit to painting the entire interior one color but that the end result is worth it. "It creates this beautiful effect of making one room bleed into the next without segregating spaces, so it makes the house feel more open and the rooms transition easily, one to the next," she says.



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Simmons Interior last summer. In order to achieve her clients' desired look, Simmons prioritized painting the entire house in Benjamin Moore White Dove, refinishing the floors, and replacing all the lighting. Those three things had to happen first, she affirms, before she'd let the clients spend a dime on furniture.

With floor-to-ceiling windows and French doors overlooking the golf course, the couple wanted to "white the place out," making it as bright as possible and taking full advantage of all the natural sunlit reflections. Simmons ran with that idea, giving the entire downstairs an updated look by adding a white-and-gray color palette, installing new cabinetry, softening the rooms with well-curated rugs and drapery, and taking the old finish off the walnut floors then oiling them to allow the natural grain to shine through. She also spent a good chunk of time sourcing appropriate lighting for the spacious house, mixing custom and other high-end fixtures with more affordable pieces she found at Lowe's and on Overstock.com.

"I knew that we were going to be very lighting-focused," Simmons says. "When you're going in and having to replace 30 to 40 lights in a house, all of a sudden that becomes an overarching theme. Making sure that was done really well was critical."

The homeowner and her husband were on the same page with Simmons' attention to detail. "I have always thought of lighting fixtures as being eye candy and a focal point

Lighting: Simmons' personal approach is to splurge on lighting in the rooms where the fixture is the main attraction and save on spaces where it's not. "If the room is adjacent and—at best—the lighting is a background feature, you can go with something that's really affordable and lower-end, because all that's doing is reinforcing the look of the showstopper," Simmons says. "It's always going to be the backup singer, it's never going to be the main focus, so what happens is because the main one is of such high quality, it brings that cheaper fixture up to that same level without even having to try."

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worth putting some thought into," she says. "Two favorites of mine that Kendall found and had shipped to us from overseas are of the same material of cast resin, but different designs that complement one another for the dining room and music room."

In Simmons' four years as a Nashville resident, she has tackled a number of similar Brentwood make-overs—aesthetic overhauls that didn't involve architectural alterations or messing with the bones of the house.

"Many of those Brentwood houses built in the late '80s and early '90s are reaching the age where they're officially outdated. All of a sudden, they're 15 or 20 years old, and young people are buying them, not knowing where to start," Simmons explains. "What's important to remember is you can get a fixer-upper, do an addition, remodel the kitchen, redo the baths, refurnish it—and feel like you got a brand-new house without having to invest the money you would for new construction."

It's much easier, she continues, "to purchase an existing home and go in, give it a facelift, and do everything cosmetic than it is to have this daunting set of drawings in front of you and invest a year of your life into building something from the ground up. That terrifies a lot of people—but buying a house that's sitting there and just needs a little bit of love is far less intimidating."

Living room: Simmons describes the homeowners as "warm, sweet, and laid-back" and the type of people who always have a fire burning and James Taylor playing in the background. "That's what the home needed to illustrate," she adds.

Kitchen: When the couple moved in, they already had a number of furnishings they wanted to incorporate into their new home. "I knew that we had to work with existing pieces, and that really set the tone," Simmons says. "We brought the dining room table from the old home, so working with our color palette, the lighting, and knowing we were going to use that table solidified the design of what that room was going to be. From there, we added layers."

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