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ART + DECORATION



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WHEN IMPERFECT IS PERFECTION

DESIGNER **KEVIN SPEARMAN** CREATES PUSH AND PULL, TENSION AND SERENITY WITH MASTERFUL FURNISHINGS, SCALE AND EDITING.

When Kevin Spearman was in college, he had his fortune read as a lark on spring break. The tarot card reader told him he had the perfect balance between Venus and Mars, yin and yang, masculine and feminine. “That’s not what you want to hear at 19,” Spearman says, laughing. “But she turned out to be right, I do love a good balance in a room.” At his firm, Kevin Spearman Design Group, the principles of yin and yang — or the way opposites complement each other — is an important ingredient in the alchemy of great design. “A room can easily tip over the edge to be too pretty or too gritty,” he says.

For a newly built Tudor in Houston’s leafy Tanglewood neighborhood, Spearman struck the right balance by taking the interiors in an unexpected contemporary direction. “I love a traditional home,” he says. “But instead of doing the expected, we gave the traditional bones an edgier and more sophisticated feel.” The choice of a cool, rather than warm color palette sets a

relaxed modern tone with gray stone on the exterior, gray-washed oak floors, and black marble fireplaces.

The black-and-white marble kitchen is one of Spearman’s favorite rooms. “A contemporary kitchen in this traditional home is a juxtaposition and surprise,” he says. “I wanted it to feel like a young, well-traveled couple bought a 100-year-old house and updated the kitchen, so that the house appears to have evolved over time.” He used

black and white throughout the house, tempering the high contrast with warm woods, including antique French oak floors and Danish furnishings. “We call it the perfect trifecta — black, white, and natural wood. Wood adds warmth, richness, and patina — otherwise the house would feel cold.”

The interiors are relaxed and sophisticated. “The house is full of personality. That comes from being collected, rather than



Left: In a hallway, a vintage Italian chest and worn leather chair contrast with an abstract painting and 1960s marble sculpture from The Window, Los Angeles.

This page: In a play of scale and composition, a small antique French painting from Kay O'Toole hangs over a muscular marble fireplace in the family room. The 1940s Fritz Hansen lounge chairs and ottoman are from Galerie Novella.



BY REBECCA SHERMAN, INTERIOR DESIGN KEVIN SPEARMAN
PHOTOGRAPHY KERRY KIRK



The library walls are enveloped in Farrow & Ball Hague Blue. Pair of Italian chairs, upholstered in Holland & Sherry fabric, from Galerie Novella. Biedermeier desk, circa 1940, purchased in NYC. Mies van der Rohe Barcelona daybed from Design Within Reach. Portrait over fireplace is a Paris flea-market find. The pottery was discovered during a trip to Copenhagen.



The custom slipcovered sectional anchors the family room without dominating so that other furnishings stand out, including a Moroccan rug, artworks, and Fritz Hansen chairs. The black marble fireplace lends strength.



A vignette in the master bedroom is a collected mix of finds including a vintage etching from Paris, antique Dutch console, and vintage brass pyramid.

The worn leather Swedish chairs are from Nathan Turner, West Hollywood. The antique library table contrasts with a graphic painting from Reeves Antiques. Pottery lamp from W. Gardner Ltd.



decorated,” he says. “Everything in the home is good, with a pedigree. It doesn’t all match, but it all works together, and that imperfection is what draws you in.” Spearman chose one or two strong elements for each room and let everything else play a supporting role. In the living room, a pair of fine 1940s Fritz Hansen lounge chairs and ottoman from Galerie Novella holds court against a muscular black marble fireplace. A custom slipcovered sectional is large but not overpowering and lets more interesting details of the room come alive, including a large antique Moroccan rug and a pair of rustic ’70s leather chairs from Sweden.

The dining room’s drama comes from walls painted in Farrow & Ball Hague Blue. “I like to have at least one dark room in every house,” he says. The wall color is an elegant backdrop for a long Holly Hunt table and highly collectable vintage Danish chairs designed by Borge Mogensen. The library is cocooned in the same Hague Blue, setting the stage for such outstanding furnishings as a 1970s burl wood desk from Belgium, a 1960s Pierre Chapo cocktail table and pair of Italian

(Continued)



“GOOD FURNISHINGS MAKE FOR GOOD ROOMS, BUT REALLY GREAT INTERIORS RELY ON THE PUSH-PULL OF OPPOSITES.” — KEVIN SPEARMAN

Opposite page, top:
In the master bath, the black-and-white tub is Victoria + Albert, with brass fixtures from Westheimer Plumbing & Hardware. Moroccan floor tile from Architectural Design Resources.

Opposite page, bottom:
In a sumptuous alcove in the master bedroom are a Vladimir Kagan vintage chaise and 1940s French rattan chairs by Louis Sognot from Galerie Novella. Floors throughout are reclaimed French oak.

Above:
A simple, draped coverlet made of Holland & Sherry wool sateen makes an elegant statement in the master bedroom. Vintage French chair by Pierre Jeanneret, purchased in France. Lamps from W. Gardner Ltd. Kelly Wearstler plaster-and-brass lamps.



Biedermeier desk, circa 1940, purchased in NYC. Chair from Randall Tysinger Antiques, North Carolina.



Vintage ladder from Randall Tysinger Antiques, North Carolina. Vaughan sconce.



Farrow & Ball Hague Blue wraps the dining room walls. Vintage Børge Mogensen chairs from Kuhl-Limscömb. Serge Mouille light fixture. Various artworks purchased at Sears Peyton Gallery, NYC.

1950s chairs in Holland & Sherry bouclé, both from Galerie Novella. In the breakfast room, a suite of six rare, mint-green 1940s Jean Prouvé circle a rustic farm table. And, an arched sitting area in the main bedroom becomes a serene retreat with a curvaceous Vladimir Kagan chaise and a pair of 1950s rattan chairs by French designer Louis Sognot.

Good furnishings make for good rooms, but really great interiors rely on the push-pull of opposites. “A really great room has to have tension to be sophisticated and draw me in,” Spearman says. “You can do that by playing with texture, proportion, and scale. For instance, in the living room, we hung a really small antique French portrait over the really big fireplace. The old painting is also next to the Fritz Hansen chairs, which are modern. There’s a difference in time periods, and the scale of everything is off. That creates both tension and mood.” Negative spaces also create tension, and what you leave out can be more important than what you put in a room. “There’s such an art to editing, and I’ve studied that over my career,” he says. “You have to know when to back off and have a quiet moment, and when to let certain pieces stand on their own.”

The main bedroom is a perfect example of the kind of restraint Spearman is known for. He nixed a hanging ceiling fixture because it would have interfered with the calm vibe of the room. “The discipline of restraint is an important part of my philosophy,” he says. “There’s always that one thing that can tip a room to becoming decorated or too glamorous. Each piece really does make a difference.” The bed is draped in gleaming wool saten — a simple gesture that is remarkably elegant and would be ruined by the addition of decorative pillows. The austere bed also shifts the focus to the gracious vaulted niche by the window. “It’s a pretty space, and I like void spaces, so we worked with that. Nothing is lined up or centered — the chaise floats to one side, chairs are scattered. There’s a juxtaposition of asymmetry and symmetry. It’s one of my favorite moments in the house.”

Not bad for a business major who fell into design after his family built a 100,000-square-foot manufacturing and office facility, then put him in charge of working with the interior designers. He was just 22, but showed such creative potential that a designer told him he should do it for a living — and he listened. He’s learned the ropes from constant study, travel, and exposure. “All that builds on itself,” he says. “Everything I’ve seen or experienced or worked on for the past two decades goes into what I’m doing now.” One of his biggest influences is the work of Belgian designer and antiques dealer Axel Vervoordt, renowned for his rustically refined interiors. He also takes inspiration from French architect and designer Joseph Dirand, a master of layering contemporary furnishings and antiques against the ornate bones of 18th-century Paris apartments.

Spearman’s focus and efforts have paid off: His Houston-based firm has done projects from coast to coast and around the globe, including a townhouse in The Netherlands and a Tel Aviv villa that was photographed by François Halard for *Feranda*. Many of his clients are in the Houston area, but he doesn’t think of himself as a regional designer. “Good design,” he says, “is global.”



A textural vignette on the stair landing focuses on an organic, rustic wood planter and iron railing. The wall sculpture from Reeves Antiques is made entirely of nails, creating shadows to form the shape.

Kevin Spearman

