



Red, reupholstered cushions and wicker furniture from a former lake house was a good fit for the more casual den, where the world travelers enjoy displaying their many treasures collected in distant locales such as New Zealand, Tanzania and Australia.

EAST MEETS WEST

BY ELAINE ROGERS • PHOTOGRAPHY BY TERRI GLANGER

SHOWCASING EXOTIC TREASURES IN A TRADITIONAL HOME...AND MAKING IT WORK

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Dallas native Lou Ann Corboy has had a lifelong affinity for exotic places and ethnic art. Her Cavalier St. Charles Spaniel, Belle, doesn't share the passion, although she is wild about Lou Ann.

Fashionable homes abound in Dallas' Highland Park area and from the outside, Lou Ann and Mike Corboy's comfortable and well-manicured residence doesn't make any waves. Inside, however, their décor is a departure from the usual with an intriguing international flavor that speaks of Africa and other faraway lands.

Lou Ann attributes her emphasis on strong Eastern influences to a love of travel rather than a master plan, explaining that she simply gathered treasures for decades, purchasing artworks, figurines and trinkets that reminded her of the foreign countries she visited and the people she'd seen. "I grew up in the bubble right here in Highland Park," she says with a laugh. "I've lived here my whole life, but I've always felt drawn to exotic places and wanted to see the people who lived there."

After majoring in anthropology at the University of Texas, Lou Ann traveled abroad extensively in the '60s while working for Braniff Airlines. Mike hails from Ireland and his work sent him to Europe frequently as well. By the time they married in the '70s, they both had their share of collections, and as they continued to travel abroad together, their plethora of foreign finds grew.

Fortunately, their square footage also expanded when they purchased their third home in the gated Glen Lakes community eight years ago. Built by a principal developer of the prestigious area, the property still touts many extras, including pond views from multiple sides, and an airy style that meshes well with Lou Ann's love of the outdoors.



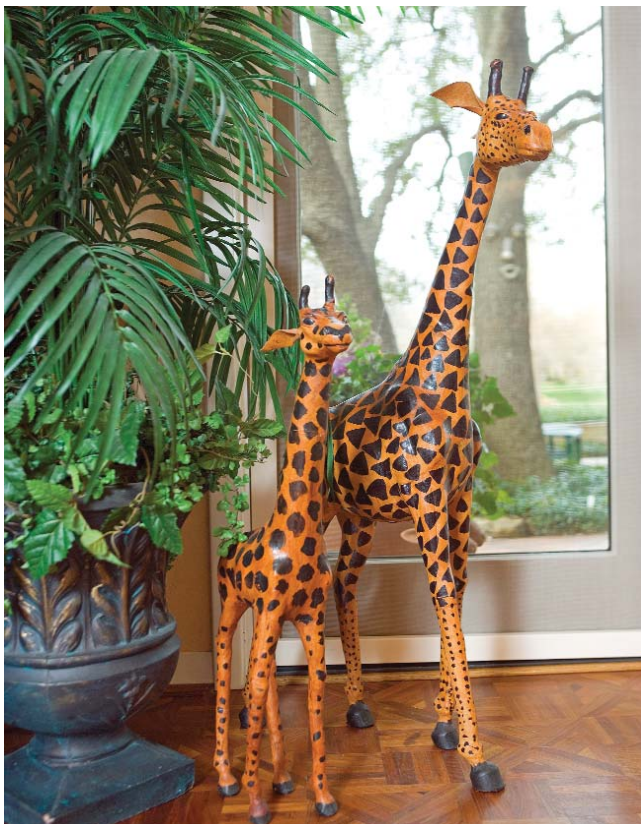
Above:
A recently enclosed sun porch further enhances the home's strong connection with the outdoors, providing a bug-free communion with the scenic surroundings.



Right:
In the main seating area of the oversized living room, a portrait of lions above the fireplace perpetuates an African theme. Window coverings are subtle, with reed shades placed high to retain the views and enhance the décor's safari feeling.



In the roomy kitchen, the homeowners kept the cobalt blue tile and stainless steel countertops that were original to the home and simply repainted the cabinetry. Right: In the den, a hand-made Indian Pichwai painting and Dhurrie rug mix with red patterned cushions to create a colorful, casual mood and provide a perfect palette for the homeowners' collections of international finds.



African influences in the home include a set of leather giraffe figurines placed playfully by a plant near the outdoor terrace.

"I've heard about people who saw a home and just knew that it was the one for them," Lou Ann says. "But it had never happened to me until I saw this one." She recalls admiring the residence from afar on frequent neighborhood walks, and actually speaking briefly with the architect and builder when it first went on the market. Some time later, when she went inside, it was love at first sight. "I ran to the living room and saw the view, and then I ran to the kitchen and saw the view, and I was just breathless. I'm sure the realtors thought I was crazy because I got so excited about it. I was just beside myself."

Attracted to the views and the architecture rather than the dated décor, Lou Ann says the 30-year-old home had been immaculately kept but not remodeled, so there were things to change, and others to simply work around design-wise. For instance, she kept the royal blue tile island in the kitchen and the stainless steel counters, and the early '70s wild elephant wallcovering in the dining room appealed to her own love of Africa and even came in her favorite color: orange. So, it stayed.

But, the Corboys' list of projects eventually grew, and three years ago, Lou Ann teamed up with local interior designer Joyce Schiska to organize the couple's cherished finds in a way that would showcase them to best advantage. "We all collect stuff, and Lou Ann and Mike had collected a lot of very unusual and amazing things in their travels," Schiska says. "But, sometimes, when people do that, it's easy to wind up with kind of a mish-mash of too many things. ...I helped show them how to put their stuff in the right places so that it tied together instead of being cluttering."

Additionally, Schiska coordinated several remodeling projects for the Corboys, transforming an outdoor patio into a glass-walled sunroom, overseeing the construction of a wine cabinet in the breakfast area and renovating a master bath. Overall, Lou Ann's taste for the exotic and Schiska's help in pulling it together forged a home they both agree suits the Corboys to a tea.

In the grand and traditionally styled living room, the vaulted ceiling is still equipped with its original acoustical tile to minimize echoing. And even with generous seating and full-sized tables employed as consoles, it still has space



for crowds. The African theme is strong here with lions posing on a portrait above the ornate fireplace and tropical silk plants lushly accenting the peach and teal furnishings. A black grand piano and peach-toned Persian carpets set a formal mood, as does a separate conversation area centered around a dining table from a previous home, with chairs upholstered to coordinate with a striking green-hued Indian Pichawai painting of an elephant.

Despite the attractions within, the wall of French doors opening out to a large outdoor terrace lures the eye with the expansive views that Lou Ann loves so dearly. Window coverings are subtle, with reed shades placed high to retain the views and enhance the décor's safari feeling.

Although the room was already equipped with four white ceiling fans, Lou Ann couldn't resist topping it all off with another treasure, an eye-catching palladium fan, bought locally but looking like she must have journeyed far and away to find it. Here and throughout the other rooms, she says what she loves most about her home is the connection with nature it affords.

"I love the relationship with the outdoors I have in this house. I can't stand air conditioning," she explains. I love the summers here and I love the heat. In this wonderful house, I can turn off the air conditioning and open the windows, and I can just sit and watch what the ducks and squirrels and Canadian geese are all doing out by the pond."

Surprisingly, Lou Ann says it was difficult at first to structure this large space in an inviting way. Despite the terrific views, the north facing room got dark, and Schiska explains, "no one ever came in here much." Some space planning and furniture rearranging turned that around, plus special touches like halogen lights above the fireplace provided the necessary brightening to make it what Lou Ann calls a fun room instead of a mausoleum. Now, the open, airiness of the main rooms is a dominant design component as well as the perfect accent to the adventurous quality that pervades the home's décor.

Color rules in the casual and much-used den, where wicker furniture from the Corboys' former lake house on Cedar Creek Lake touts cushions reupholstered in red florals and stripes. The choice, Schiska says, appeals to Lou Ann's love of color while providing a perfect place for keepsakes from distant locales ranging from Africa to New Zealand, Tanzania and Australia.

While planning some changes in the master bedroom, Lou Ann was ready to take on her private bath in the fall. She reports that the previous décor was "busy, busy," with loud tile and wallpaper selections she says were not conducive to relaxation. Schiska replaced the wallpaper with coral-toned walls faux-finished with a pearlized treatment and found tumbled granite tile in a coordinating hue. Additionally, the bath was restructured, with an outdoor alcove enclosed to accommodate a frameless shower and a separate jetted tub. Says Schiska: "It was just wasted space, so we took it out and made space for the shower."

With a window placed behind the new bathtub and a line of roof windows above it "for the openness and sunshine," Lou Ann says the reformatted space still accommodates her "nature thing," and she often basks in the sunlight in her wicker chaise, reading and relaxing in this private chamber. Final touches include a matched ivory toned toilet and bidet, and, of course, African adornments such as animal masks on the wall and decorative elephant finials on the curtain rod.

Upstairs, three bedrooms accommodate guest quarters and two offices, as the Corboys frequently host houseguests. International themes continue in those rooms as well, and Lou Ann jokes that, unlike other couples their age, she and Mike have done things backward by "upsizing" instead of downsizing. It's not a complaint, though. The home, despite its size, is flush with intimate spaces and comfortable zones well-suited to quiet times for communing with nature or sitting indoors, perhaps enjoying tales of past journeys or planning new adventures.



Playing to the safari theme of the original homeowner's elephant wall upholstery in the dining room, a chandelier that replicates the shapes of elephant tusks tops the expansive table, and window views to the home's front courtyard adorn the space with greenery year-round.



In a master bath, newly designed with a soothing coral color scheme and a matched hue of tumbled granite tile, a frameless shower and separate jetted tub receive an infusion of sunlight from a line of roof windows above. African adornments range from the animal masks on the wall to small elephant finials on the curtain rod.



Offering pond views and curving terraces on three sides, the 30-year-old property bypasses the usual yard maintenance demands that often accompany such scenery.