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NEW MEMORIES

AFTER A DEVASTATING FIRE, TEXAS DESIGNER CATHY KINCAID EMBRACES A NEW HOME, MAKING ROOM FOR EVERYTHING SHE LOVES: BLUE-CHIP ANTIQUES, MODERN ART, GRANDCHILDREN, AND—WHY NOT?—A FEW CHICKENS.

INTERIOR DESIGN CATHY KINCAID **INTERVIEW** KATHLEEN RENDA
PHOTOGRAPHY MIGUEL FLORES-VIANNA **PRODUCER** DAVID M. MURPHY

Painted in the 1930s, this seascape mural with a memorable history is the bold backdrop for the dining room of designer Cathy Kincaid's Highland Park, Texas, home. The 1820s French table, which extends to 12 feet long for Thanksgiving dinner, is set with Mexican glassware and vintage D. Porthault linens. **OPPOSITE:** Walls in Farrow & Ball French Gray echo the stripes in the Elizabeth Eakins rug.

How did a mural with schooners and seafarers in breeches land in a Texas dining room?

CATHY KINCAID: It looks like it's from an old Connecticut farmhouse, but it's pure Lone Star State. Nina Claiborne, a famous local designer and artist, hand-painted the canvas panels in the 1930s and hung them in her Dallas home. I bought her place, and the mural—how amazing is this?—was still on the dining room walls, in perfect condition. The scenes were done in a faux-naïf style, and they are charming. And fun: The story goes that Nina modeled one of the figures on her husband. He later cheated on her, so she took out her paintbrush and decapitated him—which is why a man in the mural appears to be headless! After I'd been living there for some 15 years, a fire destroyed most of the house. And the day after the blaze, with everything still smoldering and dripping wet, I was determined to salvage this artwork. The panels I could save were in bad shape, and they went into storage until I moved to this cottage. Reviving and installing them took work: My painter restored parts and re-created others. Some artistic license was taken—there's now a spot in the seascape where the waves move in two different directions!

KATHLEEN RENDA: How extensive was the fire? It wiped out our second floor completely, and water and smoke ruined sections of the downstairs. For me, it had been a very happy home.

ABOVE, FROM LEFT: Kincaid layered artwork, including a gilt-framed still life of figs from New Orleans's food-centric antiques shop Lucullus, over the dining room's mural. Painted in Farrow & Ball Borrowed Light, the glossy living room ceiling "reflects light and appears higher," she says. **OPPOSITE, FROM LEFT:** A Madeline Weinrib rug defines the dining area within the family room, where an Eero Saarinen table is paired with Thonet chairs from Design Within Reach. Cuban artist Julio Larraz's playful oil painting of a watermelon matches the whimsy—and the culinary theme—of the table's lettuceware plates.

FLOWERS FLEURT BY MARGARET RYDER

I bought it with my late husband, and it was so glamorous. The rooms were like jewel boxes, and everyone who saw them loved them. Then my husband died, and a year later the home was in flames. But do you know what I was thinking while I watched everything burn? That I was lucky. I got out safely, and so did all my pets. My baby granddaughter, who had been scheduled to visit the next day—and sleep in a bedroom that caught fire—wasn't harmed. I chose not to rebuild: A different home would be a clean slate where I could start over, without being surrounded by all the reminders of my husband. It was a chance for new memories and new beginnings.

Did you house-hunt right away?

For six months after the fire I was mentally paralyzed, and I didn't think about real estate at all. Then I fell for this old-fashioned caretaker's cottage. It's an American Shingle Style you'd swear is from rural New England. The property even had one of the oldest trees in the neighborhood.

> "A NEW HOME IS A CLEAN SLATE—A CHANCE FOR NEW MEMORIES.

But the inside was Tudor: dark rooms, small leaded windows, heavy plaster on the walls. I spent a year-and-a-half remodeling—removing cove ceilings, enlarging and moving windows—to pare it down and bring in light. I'm a firm believer in getting the architecture right. I'd rather have plain curtains on perfect windows than disguise problem windows with elaborate

“THERE’S ELEGANCE, BUT IT’S NOT FANCY.

curtains. I decorated with an eye to ease and comfort, with lots of blue and white, Indian and Moroccan, and traditional antiques. There’s elegance, but it’s not fancy—I have seven grandchildren, four chickens, three dogs, and a cat.

I didn’t expect all the contemporary art.

The modern pieces play well with the simple country style. They keep the rooms from feeling too sweet and act like a palate cleanser. What’s fascinating is that clients who originally wanted traditional art when I first did their homes are now asking me to replace the still lifes and horse portraits with more modern works by such artists as Brice Marden and Helen Frankenthaler. Afterward, the rooms seem more open. I’ve always collected contemporary art. When I bought my first piece, I had to negotiate with my husband and then take out a loan. I still have the art—it’s the Julio Larraz watermelon oil painting in the family room. It’s like I always tell my clients: Buy the best you can afford, invest in quality, and you won’t regret it.

The guest bedroom is *Princess-and-the-Pea* lavish! How do you ever get visitors to leave?

I’ve dubbed it my “convalescing from a broken leg” room. It’s cozy and comfy, it’s right on the first floor, and people do gravitate to it for extended stays. The bed, an Albert Hadley design, is always dressed with custom Leontine Linens—pretty linens are my biggest weakness. I hung the vintage mirror from John Rosselli because I think older things give a room character. They make it real. Not enough younger designers look to the past, and that’s a mistake. Maybe they’re afraid to look back? But there’s so much meaning there, and so much to be learned.

Cut in half and flanking both sides of the John Rosselli & Associates bed, a Moroccan screen that Kincaid nabbed at the Round Top Antiques Fair for $200 has double the impact in the master bedroom. The custom shade topping the vintage lamp is edged with pleating reminiscent of a tennis skirt. **OPPOSITE:** Steel-framed windows transformed the former front porch into a sunlit foyer and a wintertime orangery. "In the colder months, I fill it with my citrus trees," Kincaid says. The 19th-century fruitwood bench is French, and the octagonal table is Moroccan. Floor tiles, Ann Sacks.

THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE: Kincaid brought an exotic feel to the guest bedroom by creating a canopy for the vintage Albert Hadley bed from two Lisa Fine Textiles linens, one hand-printed with palm trees. The floral frame on the vintage John Rosselli & Associates mirror echoes the sprigs on the historic Adelphi Paper Hangings wallpaper, a reproduction of a pattern from 1760. Tucked amid custom monogrammed Leontine Linens is a Mi Golondrina pillow embroidered with the Spanish word *besos* ("kisses"). Rattan tray tables, Serena & Lily. Lamps, Pottery Barn. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES