

# Beautiful Southern HOMES

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THIS PHOTO: An unusual bronze table, designed as branch with a bird, pairs nicely with 18th-century Chinese chairs, the room's signature pieces. OPPOSITE: Purposely underscale furnishings, such as a Chinese chest, reinforce the room's ceiling height and uncluttered feel. The octagon-shape mirror over the Chinese chest started as a found object.

*Contemporary and collected* balance each other in this



*by* LINDA HALLAM *photography by* ALISE O'BRIEN  
*produced by* SUSAN ANDREWS



# Asian Spring

ode to fresh colors, pretty florals, and blue-and-white porcelains.



Rugs are an appropriate place to start setting a design scheme; after

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Knowing where to start—and where to stop—is the mark of an experienced designer. And Steve Nuss proved it when he mapped out this grandly scaled living room. His 16×30-foot space, in a house designed by noted architect Edward Tanner in the 1920s, was part of the recent Kansas City Symphony Alliance Designers' Showhouse.

The designer chose a reproduction Oushak-style rug as a starting point for a yellow-and-blue color palette and Asian theme. "Rugs are always a good place to start," Nuss says. "There are more fabric [choices] than rugs, and if you have a special budget or size you need, you should start with the rug, always. Once you find it, the rest will fall in place."

That is certainly the scenario in the living room, which is brought to life by clear hues, well-edited furnishings, and interesting—though not overly serious—art and collections. Playing off the rug, purposefully undersize to allow easy, walk-through spaces, Nuss reinforced his spring theme. He chose a soft yellow for the walls and a mix of florals, solids, and prints in blending shades of yellow for the furnishings. The neutral damask sofa provides the perfect foil for chintz pillows and French-style chairs upholstered in yellow silk.

Avoiding an overly formal look and recalling the popularity of Asian influences in the 1920s, Nuss introduced a mix of Asian furniture and art, all with the feel of being individually collected. The most important pieces are the 18th-century Chinese low-back chairs, which the designer paired with a bronze table in a tree-branch motif by a Kansas City artist. The cocktail table, a chinoiserie reproduction from China, is in the French style crafted for European markets; the Chinese chest has stronger Asian lines and details.

Finishing touches are the framed Asian-theme print and the blue-and-white porcelains hung as art and displayed as the large Chinese charger. Pagoda bookends hold Chinese books. The lamp was artfully repurposed from a Chinese vase. "In a house like this, the original owners would have collected Chinese porcelain and nice pieces from Europe and Asia," Nuss says. "I always try to keep in mind what the original people would have done. This is a classic home." It's also one curated by an expert who knew just when the design was complete. ✨

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they are chosen everything else will *fall into place.*



Designer Steve Nuss glazed over the white-painted trim for the living room's dentil molding and mantel, original to the 1920s-era house. The mirrored screen adds Jazz Age sparkle to the mix of classic European and Asian furnishings. The star-shape ottoman, upholstered in chintz, hints at the relaxed style of the country houses of the era.