

TEXT: LAURA KEECH ALLEN PHOTOGRAPHY: NANCY NOLAN STYLING: MANDY KEENER AND AMY VAUGHN

Hanging above the mantel in the formal living room, this Barry Thomas painting was the first piece the Mortons commissioned. **FADING PAGE.** In the dining room, new furnishings, more befitting the home's large scale, were combined with a series of Conte pencil drawings by Arden Boyce.



AN ACQUIRED ELEGANCE

By collecting art together, these newlyweds find the perfect way to blend their two households





When Counts and Asa Morton began preparing to move into their west Little Rock home after their marriage, they faced the inevitable design challenge of merging two established households with very different styles. They purchased a nearly completed spec home with copious windows, light limestone floors and an open, high-ceilinged layout, which seemed the perfect spot to embark on their life together. However, it was worlds away from both her quaint traditional home in St. Charles Place and his 1970s ranch-style abode in Pleasant Valley.

To bridge this divide, the couple enlisted the services of interior designer Tobi Fairley and her team at T. Lamarr Interiors and Fine Art in Little Rock. Tobi tackled the project by looking first to the home's architecture for her inspiration. "The open architecture really influenced the design, which is light and airy, with a basis in traditional elements," she says. Working with Counts and Asa, she assessed each of their belongings to find pieces that had common colors and styles, finally settling upon an overall color palette in tones of coral and aqua. "The palette is really based on a Chinese rug that Asa owned, which is now in the dining room, and a kilim-style rug that Counts owned, which we put in the family room," she says.

Tobi chose new furnishings on a larger scale for the living and dining rooms, which were more appropriate for the home's high

ceilings and grand, curved staircase, while existing pieces were reserved for more private areas. To bring all the elements together, she chose upholstery fabrics from the same family of colors. "We used a lot of fabric," Tobi says. "I love drapery, and it was the perfect unifying element to blend their belongings and create a cohesive look."

Further bringing the spaces together is the art collection that Counts and Asa began together. Although they both had purchased a few important pieces separately, neither had focused on building a collection, which became a true joint venture. "Art was the perfect way to bring their relationship together and make this home something that represented them as a new couple," Tobi says. They began by searching for a prominent piece to display above the fireplace in the formal living room, eventually commissioning an impressionist-style painting from Bary Thomas. The process was so rewarding that the Mortons now have several of his works throughout the home.

The work of Arden Boyce, a longtime friend of Counts, seemed the natural next step for the collection, and they commissioned a series of Conte pencil drawings for the dining room. "Oil paintings were too heavy for the space," Tobi says, "and we felt that to have a more well-rounded collection they needed to add some works on paper." Although the design of the home is complete, the art