



AFTER

# SITTING PRETTY

COMPLEMENTARY FABRICS, FRESH PAINT AND A BIT OF REARRANGING BEAUTIFULLY BLEND A MASTER BEDROOM AND SITTING AREA



BEFORE

**AFTER:**

*A second sofa was pulled from storage and reupholstered. A new rug, fire screen, artwork, aligned bookshelves and accessories transformed the sitting room.*

**BEFORE:**

*Staggered bookshelves were unorganized, the sofa fabric did not go with the adjoining master bedroom and a lack of furniture and rugs made for an "empty" sitting room.*

BY JOETTA MOULDEN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JANET LENZEN

Kathy and George moved to Houston from Birmingham, Ala., and did quite a bit to their house before they even moved in to bring it more in line with their taste. After our successful collaboration on the family room (DIY Decorating, "Yield to Comfort," October 2005, *Houston House & Home*), they called me back because they were "stuck" in pulling together their master bedroom and sitting room.

"When I called you to help us decorate our bedroom, I found it difficult to know where to start because there was so much that needed to be done," Kathy explains. "The house we moved from had a totally different floor plan, and we had to rethink where to place our existing furniture and what we needed to purchase specifically for this house."







AFTER

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Layers and consistent fabrics are elements that make any room interesting. Here, rugs, additional pillows, reworked window treatments, plants, paint and accessories warm the once-stark room.

**BEFORE:**

Without rugs, artwork, seating and paint on the mansard ceiling, the master bedroom lacked color and personality.

BEFORE

**TRADE | secrets**

- Your existing furniture can be restyled, repadded and reupholstered to work in your new decorating scheme.

- To create visual interest, combine paintings on canvas with art behind glass in the same room.

- Align bookshelves horizontally to calm visual chaos.

- Unify combination rooms with the same furniture and rug styles, flooring, window treatments, fabrics, color palette and accessory themes.

- Sometimes the most effective strategy is to not buy more furniture and accessories, but to rethink the pieces that already are paid for.

**FABRIC TRICKS**

Shortly before their move to Houston, Kathy had commissioned custom-made window treatments and bedding and wanted to reuse them in the new house. “We had four smaller windows in our Birmingham bedroom, instead of just one large window, and I needed someone who could help me figure out how to rework the swagged treatments I had just paid for,” she explains.

The couple also had artwork, a leftover wing chair, two sofas, a butler’s tray table and only the bare, wood frame of a matching bedroom chair (at the end of bed) to work with.

After careful measuring, my drapery workroom staff and I determined Kathy had enough fabric to rework her four existing valances and attach them to a cornice board, adding swags to each end. I suggested using fabric from the leftover swags to create matching king shams for the bed and to use any other leftover fabric as trim on pillows in the adjoining sitting area. Because the existing bed skirt was edged in a black and tan check, I suggested adding that same fabric to the bed in the form of a throw pillow, which Kathy found to match at Calico Corners.

TIP: To make a room “flow” visually in circular fashion, try tying fabrics together from one side of the room to the other, even if it is something as minor as

repeating a fabric on a throw pillow or as pillow trim. It makes the room look cohesive — like there was an actual “plan” involved.

After our initial meeting about the bedroom, I left a written list of specific items Kathy could work on, using my sketches, measurements and sources to stay on track.

This project was successful because we did it in baby steps. The heavy, custom bedspread always was sliding inside its cover, so my workroom staff reworked the spread, changing the inner batting to a lightweight fill and stitching it to the cover to eliminate slippage.

**PROJECT: PAINT**

After seeing these changes, we realized the dull, tan walls needed to be warmed. After painting a couple of sample poster boards, we repainted with Sherwin-Williams’ “Wool Challis.”

“I really, really hate picking out paint colors from those little strips from





the paint store,” Kathy says. “The greatest inventions ever are the little sample jars of paint that can be purchased in most colors. Your suggestion to paint poster board-sized samples was terrific. It was really nice to be able to compare different paints and move them around the room to see how they changed with natural and artificial light.”

#### COORDINATING COLORS

After the walls were painted, Kathy and I both desired a splash of color to break the monotony of all the black and tan, so we met at Calico Corners and found a plaid fabric with tan, black and red accents and added a thin red and gold stripe fabric to use with it. These fabrics were used on the chairs, pillows and a custom, tie-on chair cushion for the uncomfortable rush-seated desk chair.

TIP: We used the thin stripe on the upper back of the plaid chair and welted the chair with the red stripe to add dressmaker detailing. For the wing chair, which has had several different fabrics on it through the years, we picked a gold, woven chenille with red diamonds.

We found a coordinating ribbed fabric for the two sofas, which were restyled and reupholstered. The idea was to tie the sitting room into the master bedroom with the same wall color, the same plantation shutters (which were added for privacy to the French doors) and the same fabrics in the form of throw pillows on the sofas. The sofa fabric we picked blended happily with the solid bedspread fabric in terms of both its depth and actual color.

TIP: When rooms adjoin, be aware of weight and balance issues that fabrics have on the largest pieces of furniture so you don't “tilt” as you walk into the room. Avoid using a heavy, dark fabric on one half of the room and a light fabric in the other half.

#### SHELF MATTERS

On the bookshelves, I suggested lining up the shelves horizontally to calm down the visual chaos and to visually organize the corner. A splash of red paint, Sherwin-Williams' “Fireweed” semi-gloss alkyd enamel, was added to the back wall of the sitting room bookcases to continue the red color, add drama and to make the objects and books “pop.”

Because the lampshades were really white, Kathy replaced them with deep ivory shades. The result was dramatic.

TIP: To check your progress, snap photos as you go along and study them. Really white items will jump out, as will really dark ones. Your eye should not get “stuck” in one part of the room but flow across the photograph.

#### WHAT RUG?

The last decision was which rug to put on the floor. Kathy wanted a quiet, neutral open vine pattern, while George really wanted an Oriental. The couple ended up with four coordinating Oriental rugs in black, gold and red from the Great Rug Co., which not only tie both rooms together beautifully but feel good underfoot as well. They brought them home on approval, and once they saw them in the room, they knew they would work.

#### ART SMART

Once the large items — paint, rugs and furniture — were in place, it was time to style the walls. The couple had a large oil painting from their Birmingham house, which was perfect over the bed. To balance the scale of the large painting, we added two existing smaller frames underneath the framed pieces beside the bed to beef them up. The bright gold frames of the added artwork were darkened by Arden's Picture Framing to match the color of the existing frames.

TIP: You can hang different styles of artwork together in the same room if the frames and mats are the same color.

“Hiring someone to help make decisions about something as important and costly as home furnishings is money well spent,” Kathy says with a smile. “Not having lived in Houston very long and having specific places to shop and a written design plan is such a great timesaver.”

Kathy adds one of her friends, a longtime Houstonian, asked her how she knew about so many great places to shop in town. “You know, I just smiled,” Kathy says.

*Joetta Moulden offers home makeovers using your own home furnishings to create the home you've always dreamed of. Joetta believes your pieces that have been collected through the years are a reflection of your personality and can be artfully arranged.*

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