



BEFORE & AFTER

## Worth the Wait

This creative, go-with-the-flow couple spent 10 years making over their Georgia home

BY KATHERINE OWEN

**WHEN DESIGNER** Chenault James married her husband, Ed, they decided to move into his home, a 2,600-square-foot gem in Columbus, Georgia. "I thought we'd find a new house," Chenault says. "However, I quickly realized I wouldn't find another place as charming or that I loved as much." But with the home's nearly 100-year-old

bones also came a kitchen with bright orange walls, neglected interior architecture, and the final time capsule from the starter home's bachelor days: an old, beat-up leather sofa.

Chenault's big fix? Nothing more than a series of slow and steady baby steps as the family grew into its modest two-bedroom home over 10 years.



### Exterior

**KEEP IT CLASSIC**

Chenault had planned on painting the house a deep gray until she saw it primed. "It made me realize how formal the house looks," she says. "I thought, 'This house is supposed to be white!'"

EMILY JENKINS FOLLOWILL



"I never attempted one big, major redo," she says. "As I could afford to make changes, I would." Slowly, the home became infused with a fresh spirit, as art by their next-door neighbor covered blank walls, pieces built by Ed (the owner and operator of a carpentry company) filled empty nooks, and the extra

room became their first child's nursery. "Everything in our house was a flea market find or a hand-me-down. Everything I did was value engineered," says Chenault, who is now based in Louisville, Kentucky. Here are her changes, so clever and doable you'll want to steal them all for your own home.

### Living Room

#### CONSIDER A DOOR AS A FOCAL POINT

Chenault needed a decorative accent to take the room to the next level—and to mask her home office, which was visible from the front entry. So the double doors got a major update with minimal effort (and cost). She started out with a pair of hollow-core doors and topped them with mirror, followed by a ready-made geometric overlay from O'verlays ([myoverlays.com](http://myoverlays.com)). The PVC fretwork adds an elegant touch at a much lower cost than custom doors.



#### Good Neighbors

The art hanging above the fireplace comes from their 90-year-old neighbor, Marge Tilley, who creates these colorful encaustic paintings using a flame gun!



BEFORE

#### ACCESSORIZE WITH HAND-ME-DOWNS

Family mementos are nestled throughout the rest of the room. The bowl on the mantel is made from bourbon barrels from Chenault's grandfather's company, Old Rip Van Winkle Distillery. The small library of *National Geographic* magazines is a golden treasure, discovered in Ed's father's attic, that now adds zip to the room's color scheme. And the sofa? Chenault found a family-friendly gray linen replacement for Ed's old bachelor couch.



CHENAULT  
JAMES



## Dining Room

### RECLAIM A NEW TABLE

In need of a dining table, Chenault dreamed up a creative solution that would require a little luck and lots of elbow grease from Ed. "He's a big hunter, so I told him to keep an eye out for some fallen cedar trees," she says. Luckily, he stumbled upon a group of stumps at an old woodworking shop soon after. They snagged three, nestled them together, and had a metalworker fabricate a steel rod with plates under the stumps so a glass top could be bolted on. Ed also dressed up the walls with classic molding strips that he applied himself.



### Less Is More

"One of the first things I did was replace the white wood blinds with bamboo shades from Blinds.com. They are clean-looking as well as inexpensive," says Chenault.



## Master Bedroom

### CREATE YOUR OWN STARTING POINT

Chenault wanted a funky headboard. "I was determined not to have a super-traditional shape. I had this fun design made to lighten things up," she says. The rest of the room's furnishings are serendipitous finds: A love seat covered in Fortuny fabric came from an estate sale, and the lamps are from a former boss in Atlanta.



### Brighten with White

Chenault used Creamy (SW 7012) by Sherwin-Williams for the kitchen and exterior. "It's my go-to white. True to its name, it's perfectly creamy," she says.

## Daughter's Room

### MAKE IT MULTIFUNCTIONAL

When their oldest child, Neal, was born, the second bedroom had to be both a nursery and a guest room. Chenault opted for a more mature green-and-cream palette that plays off the greens in the Matouk bedding (a wedding gift) and a vintage 8-inch, green curtain trim that she already had. She sewed the trim onto burlap curtains to save money. Ed, the carpentry wiz, made the heart-pine side tables. Then, Chenault hit the estate sale circuit again to find the matching headboard and chair that worked with everything else she already owned.



## Kitchen

### ADAPT WHAT YOU ALREADY HAVE

Once their two children outgrew high chairs, the family needed a kid-friendly spot for eating in the kitchen. Chenault took a pair of faux-snakeskin-covered sawhorse legs that were sitting around unused and

topped them with a piece of marble to create the new kitchen table. "There are only a few things in our house that I purchased for a particular spot," she recounts. "Bring pieces that you love into your home, and over time, they will work together."



## Back Hall

### EXPERIMENT WITH COLOR AND ART

The hallway that leads to the bedrooms lacked a punch. "It was always just a boring gray-white hallway. But then I got really into Farrow & Ball's full-gloss finish paint." Chenault initially ordered a can of Olive (13, [us.farrow-ball.com](http://us.farrow-ball.com)) for another project, but she decided to try it in

the hall instead. Once the paint was dry, up went the misfit art and knickknacks. "I didn't have a place for everything, so I decided, 'Well, let's do a gallery wall of all this random stuff.'" The collection includes everything from a silhouette of her daughter, Neal, to framed whiskey labels from her grandfather.



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**HOME & GARDEN**

**Balancing Act**

Creamy walls, Carrara marble, and dainty glass details (like the knobs and chandelier) play off the hardwood floor's warmth.



**The Master Bath**

**DON'T RULE OUT HARDWOOD**

The couple's master bath weathers a good bit of foot traffic (especially that of the four-legged kind) because it connects the rest of the house to the laundry room. Chenault loved not only the warmth of the hardwood in an all-white room but also its ability to handle the traffic. "If I had gone with tile, I would have wanted white, and the floor would have always looked dirty," she explains. **SL**