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When a young couple, both doctors, purchased a 1920s Spanish-style house on Lake Minnetonka, they knew this was a special property. Its lovely bone structure, gracious rooms, original clay tile, and old-growth oak flooring—all in perfect condition—drew them in.

Yet they wanted to make the house into a home that fit their modern lifestyle and growing family. Another complication: They have wildly different design aesthetics—she prefers contemporary; he loves a heavier, gothic look.

Fortuitously, Jeff Murphy of Murphy and Co. Design, who was working with the couple on a plan that would double the size of the original house, introduced them to interior designer Robb Whittlef of Historic Studio. Whittlef, who spends half his time in California, knows how to balance modern cool with antique soul—the look so well mastered in California.

While Murphy stitched the old and new parts of the house together with a Spanish-inspired, arched colonnade, Whittlef masterfully balanced the couple's interior-design preferences. Vintage light fixtures throughout, old-growth timber flooring for the addition, clay tile replicated by Batchelder Tile to match the original, and antique Spanish cabinets in the master bath. The showstopper: The three-century-old cabinet in the kitchen, once in an Addison Mizner house that was torn down.

The results show off with spare drama what Whittlef calls the dialogue between modern cool and antique character. "The object that has patina and history to it is given context by the space that's around it," he says.

That mix, artfully done, is part of the language of collected chic—a look that is as timeless as it is personal to the individuals who live in the home. It's the culmination of eclecticism, boho style, comfort, and self-expression. But it's far from effortless to achieve without expert help.

INTERPRETING... YOU

Designers want to get to know their clients to better create personalized spaces that feel like home. "My job as a designer is to interpret [a client's] essence—the good, the bad, and everything in between. I'm interested in the people as part of the design, not just the design," says Carter Averbeck, owner of Omforme Design.





CLOCKWISE Rooms added during the remodel of a 1920s Spanish-style house maintain the scale and proportions of the original home, but form a modern canvas for antique lighting and accessories. Designer Robb Whittlef found the kitchen's hero: A 300-year-old cabinet salvaged from a razed Addison Mizner house. Antique Spanish cabinets serve as vanities in the master bath; the side panels were reused as doors for the medicine cabinets.



PHOTOS SPACECRAFTING