

TRADITIONAL HOME

November 2001

SENSATIONAL
WALL COVERINGS

GLORIOUS AUTUMN
COLOR IN THE GARDEN

REDISCOVERING
CAMPAIGN FURNITURE

ARTFUL INTERIORS

HOMES BRIMMING WITH PERSONALITY





Left and above: Parquet floors original to this 1885 home influenced Audrey's color and pattern choices in the living room. The framed artwork above the new neoclassical mantel is an ancient Burmese religious text. Walls are glazed with layers of mustard and amber paint.

the flea markets, the textiles," Audrey explains. "And I was taken by the colors, the textures, and the brilliance."

Audrey remained in Japan for six years. During that time she met her husband, also an American working in Tokyo, segued from

modeling to interior design, and began studying and stockpiling Asian antiques and artifacts, many of which eventually found a home here on the other side of the Pacific.

It took the Brandts more than two years to find this unusual house. Good bones and great light were requirements, as was ample space to play host to their large family and many friends. One reason the search took so long was that Audrey required a house that had not yet been renovated. "I wanted the joy of doing it myself," she says. "Wherever we've lived, I've always redone the kitchens and bathrooms, but this time, I wanted the fun of doing the house top to bottom, of making it just exactly the way we would want it."

And so she has. The pretty, turreted house, built in 1885 as a wedding present from a father to his son and new daughter-in-law, fit Audrey's specifications. Somewhere along the line, the four-story house had fallen on hard times, been divided into apartments, and lost its inherent charm. Audrey put it back together, updating all systems and decorating fearlessly, precisely the way she envisioned.



Right: The African-inspired family room is a tribute to Audrey's adventurous grandparents, whose portrait sits on the Korean chest. The sectional sofa pulls out to become a queen-sized guest bed. Chocolate brown velvet theater draperies run on a ceiling-mounted track via a remote control. Linen valances adorned with bamboo-and-leather ties lighten the blackout draperies. **Left and below:** The custom entertainment center features lustrous African bubinga and wenge wood in a Japanese-inspired design.

"Though our house is Victorian, I wanted to create a decidedly exotic sensibility, one that is still a bit formal, but definitely different from what you would expect to find inside the doors of a historic American home," Audrey explains. Key to this home's beauty is its vibrant palette—complex hues that reflect the designer's love of all things Asian and her own warm, kinetic personality. The common areas are wrapped in mustard, amber, bronze, burnt orange, and lacquer-red tones, hues that are not only rich and exhilarating but also very welcoming.



Every room is brimming with treasures from family adventures. Accent pillows throughout the house feature lustrous kimono and obi fabrics collected during Audrey's exploration of the Japanese countryside. Side-by-side chests in the music room (originally a single 200-year-old stacked tansu chest) are the first furnishings the Brundts ever purchased together. The striking brush-painted panels above the chests were a wedding present from Audrey's twin.

In the family room, where the sensibility is African, the memories are especially dear. The room, with its bold persimmon walls, dark chocolate window sills, and theater-style velvet draperies that turn the sunny space into a dramatic screening room, pays homage to Audrey's globe-trotting grandparents, who inspired a young girl to become a world traveler herself. "They were amazing role models," she says. "They fostered in me a 'just do it' mentality, not only





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—AUDREY BRANDT

about travel, but about life.” The elephant patterns used so charmingly on accent pillows and for the modified Roman shades are a salute to Audrey’s grandmother, who loved elephants and collected items with elephant motifs. The custom entertainment center blends pearwood, African bubinga, and wenge wood with Japanese design aesthetics.

The mood in the kitchen is simply Zen. The palette, more subdued than in other common rooms, allows the rich natural materials—limestone floors, mahogany cabinetry, and textural granite—to take the spotlight. Walls are glazed sunny yellow, and stainless accents, including the range and its sleek cylindrical hood, enhance the natural light. The cabinetry is inspired both by tansu chests and shoji screens; glass insets feature abstract rice-paper designs. The L-shaped banquette in the dining area overlooks the backyard and is upholstered with fabric

depicting Japanese brushwork and seals. It is paired with a wedge-shaped table supported by a bamboo base that is reminiscent of many old Japanese gates and doors.

“I had always dreamed of having a kitchen banquette, because they seem so inviting,” Audrey says. “And it has turned out to be everything I hoped it would be. We all are drawn to this spot.” The kitchen window treatments amplify the Japanese feeling here. Fine bamboo stick



Right: The kitchen’s quieter palette and southern exposure put natural materials—mahogany cabinetry with glass-and-rice-paper insets, limestone tiles set on the diagonal, and rich granite counters with an unusual reverse bevel edge—in the spotlight. **Above:** The inviting wedge-shaped table with a striking bamboo base has an L-shaped banquette with under-seat storage on two sides.





Opposite: Audrey's dressing table marries a Japanese women's vanity and a Japanese student desk. The stool is made from a Japanese *katatsu*, a coal-burning warmer, placed on an iron stand and topped with a seat cushion that's covered in an antique kimono fabric. **Below:** The master bedroom is embraced by murals depicting serene Japanese landscapes. **Right:** Audrey and her children, Garrett and Arianna, in front of the bedroom's new fireplace.



shades, called *sudare*, are embellished with temple bells. There is also a fixed screen high above the *banquette* that echoes the design of the table base.

Nowhere in this house is the Japanese feeling more profound, or more profoundly beautiful, than in the master bedroom.

"We both lead hectic, active lifestyles, so this is our sanctuary," Audrey says. "This room embodies our shared love of Japan, our time in Japan together, and our love of nature. It's a place where we can escape to read, relax, and enjoy what little downtime we have."

A dreamy mural painted in soft green and gold establishes the room's calm mood and depicts the Brandts' favorite images of the Japanese countryside. A pearwood-and-mahogany headboard set against the mural creates the subtle impression of temple architecture on a misty morning. The bed's coverlet illustrates a *geisha* in an intricate patchwork of antique *obi* and *kimono* fabrics. Its construction was overseen by Audrey's twin, who still lives in Japan and also works as an interior designer.

Family ties run throughout the house that Audrey rebuilt. "I had the rare opportunity to be in control of an entire project, from top to bottom, to work with my sister, to create my dream house. What a thrill!" ■

For more information, see the Reader's Resource on page 246.

