

MAKING HER MOVE



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PAIGE MEIER DIDN'T KNOW SHE WAS IN THE MARKET FOR A NEW HOUSE. A REAL ESTATE AGENT IN PORTLAND, OREGON, SHE WAS SEARCHING FOR A HOME ON BEHALF OF CLIENTS WHEN SHE STUMBLED ACROSS A DEVELOPMENT OF NEW HOUSES. THE CLIENTS WEREN'T READY TO MOVE IN, BUT TO PAIGE'S SURPRISE, SHE WAS. "I DON'T NORMALLY FAVOR NEW CONSTRUCTION," SHE SAYS, "BUT I COULDN'T GET THIS PLACE OUT OF MY MIND."

The home had much to love about it, including 14-foot ceilings, dark walnut floors, and wood molding, all of which gave it a sense of character and age. It also required no yard work, offered an open floor plan for entertaining, and overlooked five acres of green space where Paige's dog, Hannah, could explore.

For a second opinion, Paige called her friend Heidi Semler, an interior designer and former roommate whom she's known since 1989. In sync with each other's thoughts, the two share the same aesthetic sensibility. "I came over and started waving my arms around," Heidi says. "I told Paige, 'We could do this and we could do that.'" With Heidi's support, Paige bought the house and began to stamp it with her personal style. Paige's goal: Make the house look as comfortable and lived-in as possible—a place where guests could plop down on the sofa and feel at home.

First to go was the nondescript carpet, which was removed from the master bedroom, den, living room, and guest room. In its place, wall-to-wall seagrass provides color and texture to give furnishings a visual boost. Those furnishings would be mostly new for one simple reason: Paige was moving from a house where the ceilings were 8 feet high. In this roomier environment, she needed supersize pieces to match the scale of the rooms. "I wanted the furnishings much larger and not as formal," Paige says.

Before Paige could make any purchases, though, she needed a color palette—something warm, tranquil, and unpretentious with muted fabrics, soft colors, and faded prints. Heidi brought her a vintage-looking fabric to use as slipcovers for mismatched living room chairs, setting the tone for the rest of the design decisions.

Paige opted to retain most of the home's features, including a well-designed kitchen and a warm neutral wall paint that changes color throughout the day. There was room for improvement, though. Custom-built bookshelves now fill a wall in the entry, providing a gallery for Paige's collection of ironstone. And a bench in the dining area provides storage and seating while matching the architectural style of the house.

To keep costs down, Paige picks up many furnishings at estate sales. A pair of chairs in her bedroom were a freebie on the last days of a sale. "They'd been sitting outside in the garden, so they were real weathered. I liked them the way they were," Paige says.

Another money-saving adventure: While out shopping one day, Paige and Heidi sorted through a table of department-store sheets. The two women surfaced at the same moment, both holding sheets with a small toile pattern and creamy butter background. Paige bought \$150 of them, providing enough fabric for two upholstered headboards, bedskirts, duvets, and linens for the twin beds in the guest room.

Heidi credits Paige with a willingness to take risks. "She likes to have the place look beautiful and sophisticated," she says. "The informality of this house is such a nice change," Paige says. "I feel totally comfortable here."

Paige Meier and her friend Heidi Semler enjoy conversation on a deck carefully furnished with finds from antiques stores and estate sales. The table and chairs were moved from Paige's former home and painted white to suit the calming color palette of her new house.

UNCOVERED WINDOWS LOOK OUT ON A GREENBELT THAT MAKES PAIGE FEEL LIKE SHE'S OUT IN THE COUNTRY. "WHAT I LOVE ABOUT THIS PLACE IS ITS SERENITY."





Without a formal dining room, Paige entertains guests in a slice of space between the kitchen and the step-down living room. On casters, the table can be rolled out of the way when needed. OPPOSITE All the chairs in the living area are covered in the same faded-look fabric. The sofa is covered with a nubby linen slipcover.



{WE WANTED TO KNOW}

It's one thing to buy and decorate a house. It's another thing to live in it. Paige shares a few of the reasons she's happy with her purchase.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT ENTERTAINING HERE?

It's just got a great flow. I like how the kitchen, dining area, and living room are open to each other. The informality is a nice change.

WHERE DO YOU AND YOUR PUP HANG OUT?

Hannah stretches out on a little bed in front of the fireplace; that's probably her favorite place. I'll grab a book and come sit with her.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE THING ABOUT THE HOUSE?

The seagrass rugs. They don't show dirt, you don't have to vacuum them every five minutes, and they look fabulous all the time.

WHAT ARE YOU ON THE HUNT FOR? I want a rug and an old oil painting for the entry—maybe a portrait or a painting of a dog. And I'm always looking for ironstone and old wood boxes.



THIS PAGE Near the fireplace, cement fruit-basket finials top a dresser that belonged to Paige's grandmother. Ironstone plates and platters fill a large wall space. OPPOSITE, LEFT Paige removed the doors from some kitchen cabinets to house her collection of blue-and-white china and ironstone. OPPOSITE, RIGHT Paige takes time out to play with Hannah, a Weimaraner whose sleek gray coat seems to fit right into the home's muted color scheme. OPPOSITE, BOTTOM A custom-designed wall of shelves in the entryway serves as a gallery for Paige's ironstone and estate-sale finds.



THIS PAGE The partially covered deck can be accessed from the living room and master bedroom. A large mirror bounces even more light into the outdoor living space, outfitted with a comfy wicker chair and a secondhand bistro set that Paige spruced up with white paint.

OPPOSITE Strategically placed near the master bedroom's French doors and clothes armoire, this teak chair made in Bali was a lucky garage-sale find.



“I DIDN'T THINK MUCH ABOUT THE DECK WHEN I BOUGHT THE HOUSE, BUT IT HAS BECOME AN EXTENSION OF THE LIVING ROOM. I HAVE COFFEE OUT THERE ALMOST EVERY MORNING. IT'S SO PEACEFUL AND PRIVATE.”





THIS PAGE Paige found this pair of chairs for the master bedroom in the back of an antiques store and re-covered them with chocolate-and-white calfskin. Kitchen cabinet doors were hung as interior shutters. OPPOSITE, LEFT A small ironstone pitcher with white roses pops against a black tole tray. OPPOSITE, RIGHT In the den, a wall-to-wall sofa was custom-built because freestanding furniture wouldn't fit through the door or windows. "It's like two twin beds lined up," Paige explains. OPPOSITE, BOTTOM For the guest bedroom, Heidi and Paige bought extra flat sheets to make upholstered headboards, duvets, and skirts. ☼



“I WANTED THINGS LOOSER HERE—IT’S WHERE I AM NOW,” SAYS PAIGE. “IN MY OLD HOUSE, EVERYTHING LOOKED PERFECT, BUT PEOPLE WERE AFRAID TO SIT ON THE SOFAS.”

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