

# Home A LOVE STORY

A HAPPY MARRIAGE BALANCES PASSION AND COMPROMISE. SO DOES SMART INTERIOR DESIGN. HERE'S HOW DESIGNER MEGAN OPEL BRIDGED THIS VICTORIAN'S HISTORICAL DETAILS WITH THE HOMEOWNERS' DISPARATE TASTES.

## DINING ROOM

Emily Kirschner is a self-proclaimed vintage-lover and is, as she puts it, "Facebook Marketplace obsessed." Her husband, Dan, meanwhile, favors more modern design. They define their combined look as Parisian: A mix of antiques from different eras and styles layered over their home's elegant architecture. To help their collections feel united and establish flow between rooms, designer Megan Opel relied on a tight palette of creamy white, black, and taupe (introduced in the dining room rug and in brass, leather, and wood pieces).

When on the hunt for something particular, Opel tells local antiques dealers to keep an eye out. That's how this 1930s toy store display case ended up here.





Opel modernized the original carved mantel with white paint and new black marble tile—a glam high-contrast update to the soft gray there before.



### THE FAMILY

Dan Kirschner—here with wife Emily and kids Chloe, Eve, Andrew, and Madeleine, and dog Izzy—prefers clean-lined modern pieces, like the entryway’s large pendant and Eames Hang-It-All coatrack; both are in black to mimic the original front door and the leaded-glass sidelights.

When Emily and Dan Kirschner started their River Forest, IL, house hunt, they knew cookie-cutter wasn’t going to cut it. With its leaded-glass windows and original millwork, the 1880s Victorian they landed on is anything but. However, it was also painted tip to toe in shades of terracotta and didn’t fit the couple’s his-and-her dreams of super clean and modern (for Dan) and soulful, collected, and not too perfect (for Emily).

To help them achieve their vision—and make sure the house was practical and comfortable for four kids and a dog—they turned to designer Megan Opel. “Emily didn’t want her house to look ‘instantly decorated,’” Opel says, “and she wasn’t in a hurry.” Over time, Opel helped curate the couple’s inspirations and collections, blending them against a house-wide base of creamy white paint, black accent pieces, and a few thoughtfully chosen, extra-durable pieces of contemporary furniture. “If every single thing is vintage, the house could look like an antiques store,” Opel says. Case in point, the dining room combo of an antique crystal chandelier, custom trestle table, and Eames dining chairs: something old, something new, something modern (and wipe-able too). A happy marriage indeed.

### ENTRYWAY

The whole house, including the original carved wood stair balusters, got a fresh coat of paint: Buttermilk from Restoration Hardware. “A very creamy white works well for an old home with high ceilings,” Opel says. “A brighter white would have looked sterile.” She paired an iconic Nelson platform bench with a tattered vintage Oushak rug to create a “cool tension” and peppered the stairwell with graphic black-and-white paintings.



When searching vintage rugs online, Opel chats with the seller to confirm a piece is vintage (not just vintage-style) and asks for extra photos or even videos of her picks.



## FAMILY ROOM

Opel specified sturdy new sofas (with stain-resistant fabric), rugs, and lighting so they would go the distance in the high-traffic family room. She mixed in a vintage marble-topped coffee table and a pair of ottomans she found on Etsy and had re-covered to coordinate with the new fireplace surround. Opel's signature styling approach is on display along the mantel: an extra-tall antique mirror flanked by a vase of foliage and sculptural objects.

"For pillows, I like to splurge on designer fabrics," Opel says, "then I buy zippers and welting online and bring all the supplies to my dry cleaner's tailor to sew for about \$25."



Fill a vase so most stems max out around two-thirds the height of your mirror. Opel's source for the faux stuff: [ndi.com](http://ndi.com).



“IT'S OK TO TRY THINGS OUT IN DIFFERENT ROOMS AND SEE WHAT WORKS. THE BEAUTY OF DECORATING WITH NEUTRALS IS YOU'RE NOT BOUND TO SET PLANS.” MEGAN OPEL, designer

For mantel styling, mix up the shapes: boxes, sculptural bookends (check estate sales for leather-bound books), or a bowl with a string of glass beads.





“ I LOVE  
DECORATING  
AND STYLING—  
IT’S MY LOVE  
LETTER TO MY  
FAMILY. ”

EMILY KIRSCHNER,  
homeowner

This pine flooring was painted dark brown so the couple wasn't afraid to repaint it white. "Now it feels like you're in an artist's studio," Emily says.



### KIDS BEDROOM

The black spindle bed (a new-to-look-old Jenny Lind) is made up in Opel's go-to style: plain white sheets and duvet with a pair of Euro pillows (use a trio for a king bed, *opposite*), a single lumbar pillow, and folded quilt. "They can easily change out quilt and pillows so the room can grow with her over time," Opel says.

### PRIMARY BEDROOM

"Dan's style is ultramodern, and Emily's is more romantic," Opel says. She softened their sleek black iron canopy bed (a holdover from their former home) with a fluffy cotton duvet, subtly patterned pillows, and layered rugs. ■



Opel uses burl wood throughout the house for some French Deco flair. "Guaranteed, each piece has its own unique pattern," she says.