

Photographed by Leslie Mitchell for Robin Rains Interior Design.

When a design-savvy couple first approached **Robin Rains** with an unconventional commercial-to-residential conversion project, the designer knew she was in for a treat.

"They went on to explain that they owned a commercial building in the middle of Historic Franklin Square (about 20 miles out of Nashville) and had decided that they wanted to turn it into a second residence, for their own personal use," the Tennessee-based Rains — of [Robin Rains Interior Design](#) — explains.

Holding pride of place in one of Franklin's most esteemed districts, is where you'll find Pope House, a 1,000-square-foot "residential jewel box to enjoy on weekends." It's a little brick house with a big history and nine lives.

"It was first built 1899 by the Pope family. Dr. Pope was a local dentist and had his dental practice in the building, he lived next door with his family. The space originally consisted of a foyer, a front room, a second room (now bedroom) and a bathroom (now the kitchen area). When our clients first purchased the building, they rented it to lawyers, a cupcake business, a dress shop, children's clothing store, jewelry boutique, and an art gallery — before eventually making it a residence. Because of all of the previous commercial tenants, the space lacked personality and warmth. Plus, there were so many commercial elements such as lighting and wiring that we had to discard during the renovation."

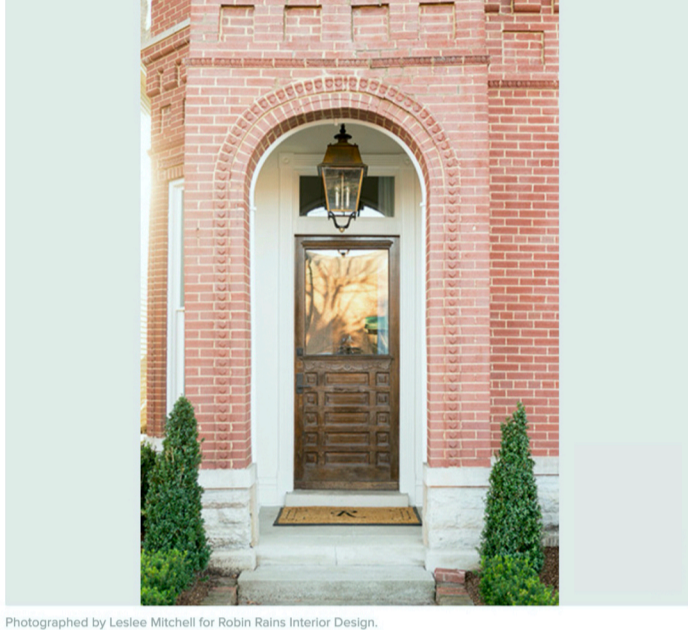
Rains, working alongside principal designer **Kate Ladd Chlebowski**, quickly set to work, reinstating the historic home's character and original charm. The designer cast the net wide, sourcing unique mid-century furniture from all over Europe, and an antique front door, sourced direct from France.

The result? A revived *piéd-à-terre* that now speaks to the duo's penchant for collecting, love of travel, unexpected color play, and quirky design style. What once stood as a dimly lit dental practice, now hums at a very different frequency, layered with global finds, reupholstered vintage furniture, and custom creations.

Benjamin Moore Paint; Circa Lighting Floor Lamp; Vintage Armchairs; Vintage Zebra Hide; Vintage Mirror; Vintage Coffee Table.

Street Appeal

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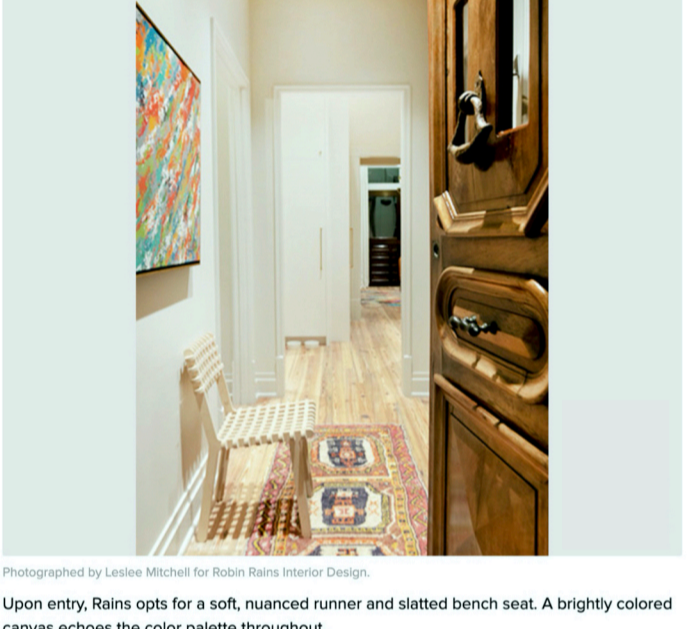
Photographed by Leslie Mitchell for Robin Rains Interior Design.

"The red brick exterior does adhere to the historic surroundings of downtown Franklin," explains Rains, when quizzed about the building's location.

"The back of the building is a surprise with its zinc scale-like surface. In 2009, my clients hired architect **Scott Wilson** to improve the exterior of the building. He suggested the zinc fish scale exterior — which the city approved — as this material was historically used on church steeples in the 1800s. We decided to change out the commercial door in the back to an antique walnut door we sourced and purchased in France."

Clear Passage

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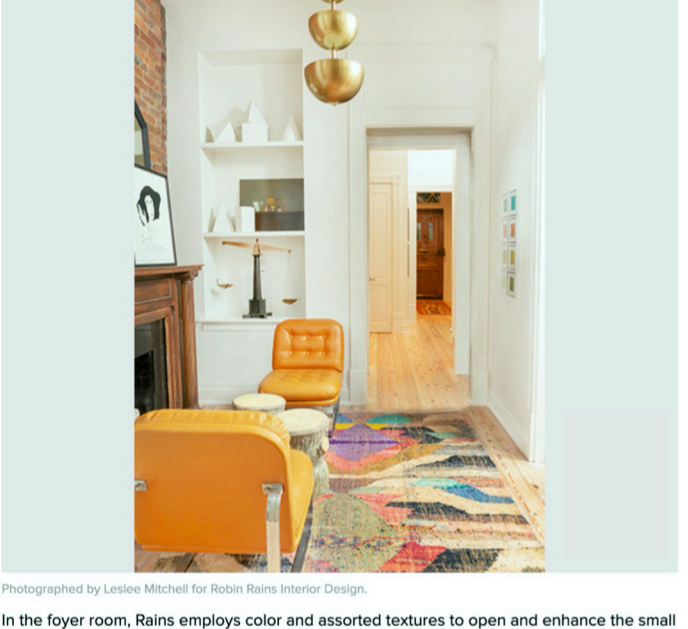
Upon entry, Rains opts for a soft, nuanced runner and slatted bench seat. A brightly colored canvas echoes the color palette throughout.

"The clients wanted to keep the original character of the space, namely the exposed brick walls and beautiful original fireplace mantles, while making the space feel like a *real* home," the designer explains. "They liked the idea of creating a visual surprise — the result that comes with incorporating different design styles and vintage pieces, and were very open to a good mix."

Antique Door; Vintage Runner.

Mid-Century Leanings

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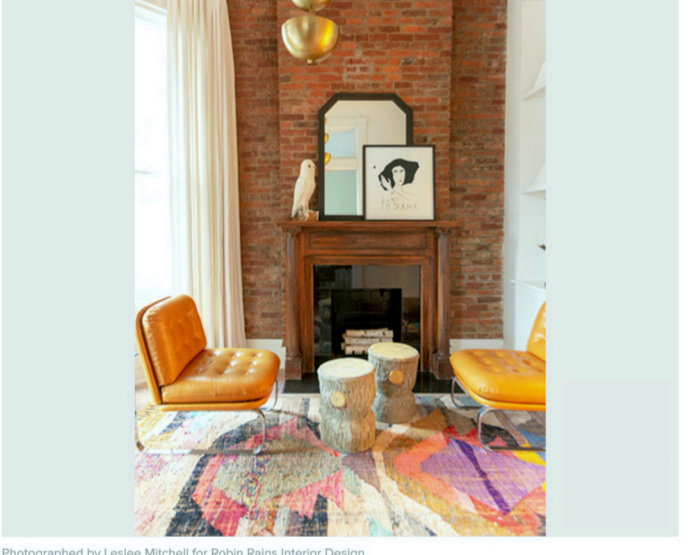
In the foyer room, Rains employs color and assorted textures to open and enhance the small space.

"We especially love the pair of armless leather '70s vintage chairs with chrome bases," the designer begins. "Their small scale is perfect for the proportion of the fireplace and room — plus, they look so cozy facing one another."

Benjamin Moore Paint; Eliko Rugs Rug; Vintage Accent Tables; Arteriors Chandelier.

Styled To Scale

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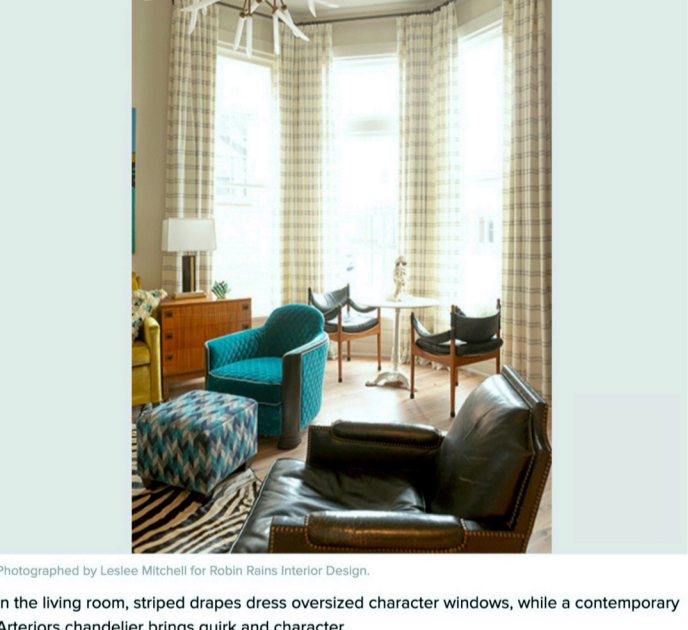
Photographed by Leslie Mitchell for Robin Rains Interior Design.

"Keep the bones of an historic home whenever possible," advises Rains. "Think exposed brick, decorative fireplaces, old floors — as it makes sense to do so. Once these features are gone, they are gone! It's not the same trying to replicate historic details."

The designer opts for a multicolored rug by [Eliko Rugs](#), [Arteriors](#) gold chandelier, and organic accent tables in the intimate foyer-turned-living space.

Window Seat

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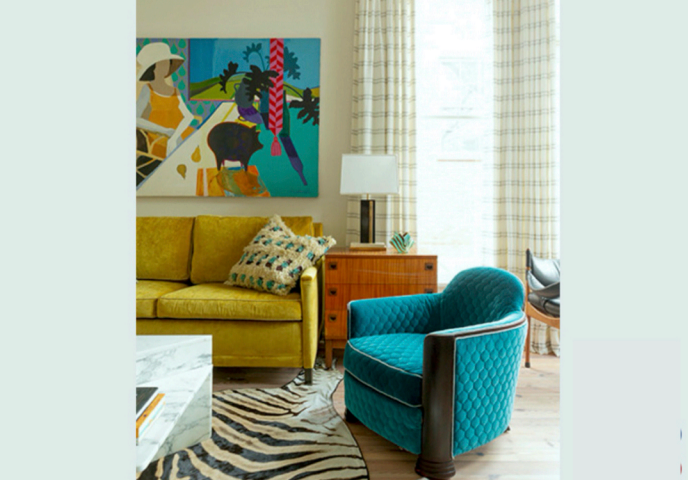
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In the living room, striped drapes dress oversized character windows, while a contemporary [Arteriors](#) chandelier brings quirk and character.

Benjamin Moore Paint; Vintage Armchairs; Vintage Lounge Chair; Romo Upholstery; Lee Industries Sofa; Eliko Rugs Pillow; Vintage Chest; Kristy Cohn Design Artwork; Vintage Coffee Table; Abstrakt Concrete Table; Circa Lighting Floor Lamp; B&B Metal Designs Custom Drapes; Vintage Accent Table; Vintage Zebra Hide.

Color Play

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Photographed by Leslie Mitchell for Robin Rains Interior Design.

Here, Rains opts for mid-century lines and unexpected color choices — like teal and mustard velvet upholstery.

An oversized artwork by [Kristy Cohn Design](#) pulls the room together, cohesively tying in the [Lee Industries](#) sofa and blue [Romo](#) armchair.