

Second *Nature*

Designer Lauren Liess takes a laid-back approach to decorating with a neutral palette and eclectic furnishings.

By Danielle Blundell

Photography by Helen Norman

A leather sofa from Anthropologie and custom brass starburst chandelier set a modern tone in the living room. The exposed ceiling beams were hand-sanded for an aged effect, and the formerly dark space was brightened up with Benjamin Moore's Ancient Ivory. Lauren made lightweight curtains from her Lauren Liess Textiles Boho Stripe fabric. "I wanted the emphasis to be on the trees outside, so I decorated with quiet patterns and shades of beige."





Inspired by vintage baking racks, Lauren designed the kitchen's open shelving with local ironworker Tom Owens. The large marble and reclaimed wood island is an ideal spot for meal prep. Large appliance pulls make it easy for the boys to grab their snacks from the cabinet drawers.



Left: Pressed botanicals, simply framed with glass and black gaffer's tape, provide a focal point above the sink and soapstone counters. Below: White serving pieces collected by Lauren over the years make a pretty display in a wooden hutch.



Left: Lauren hung three Ikea butcher-block shelves next to the refrigerator to hold barware, storage containers and decorative objects.



"Instead of a bunch of bright colors," says Lauren, "I like to mix metals—iron, brass, chrome and steel."

Lauren Liess likes nothing better than a design challenge. So in 2012, when perusing the local real estate listings, Lauren didn't hesitate to snap up a 1970s house in northern Virginia that needed a major overhaul. She saw a renovation as an opportunity to test-drive her decorating ideas and share the decision-making process on her blog, Pure Style Home. Lauren, her husband, David, and their three young sons (later joined by baby girl Gisele) moved into the upstairs as construction took place below—new floors, more windows, a reconfigured master suite and an enlarged cook's kitchen made possible by removing one wall and relocating another. When the dust cleared, the designer got to work creating a laid-back and airy environment with ivory paint, kid-friendly slipcovered furniture and rustic finishes. Lauren layered in fabrics from her own Lauren Liess Textiles line and peppered the walls with artwork scored over the years at flea markets and garage sales. "The common thread running through the rooms is bringing the outdoors in," says Lauren, author of *Habitat: The Field Guide to Decorating*. "For me, earthy colors, woods with patina and woven fibers like jute and linen come together to create the perfect warm, welcoming glow."

“Pair Roman shades with fabric panels for privacy plus an extra hit of texture,” says Lauren.



The family eats most of their meals in the sunny breakfast nook. David, who's also Lauren's business partner, holds Gisele, 6 months, while Louie, 3, Christian, 8, and Justin, 5, dig into waffles. Vintage printer trays, mounted on the wall between the windows, hold the kids' collectibles. Lauren's grandparents gave the whitewashed chairs to the couple as a wedding present.



To give the small, dark dining room a cozy-not-cramped vibe, Lauren covered the ceiling with inexpensive exterior cedar siding. A mix of materials and furnishings—a vintage capiz pendant light, a metal table and chairs slipcovered in hemp—rounds out the scheme.



“I’m obsessed with ferns and botanicals and always on the lookout for vintage bookplates to frame.”

The master bedroom features Lauren’s ever-expanding gallery wall of black-and-white nature-inspired pictures. She fashioned the duvet from Lauren Liess Textiles Fern Star fabric. The upholstered bed is from Restoration Hardware.