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A LITTLE ROMANCE

First-time homeowners **JASON AND MEGAN GONZALEZ** marry their love of classic elegance with personal modern touches.

By Taylor Selcke
Photographs by Lauren Krysti



Homeowners Jason and Megan Gonzalez worked with artist Mark Herman to create the dining room's gallery wall. The Minnesota-inspired prints represent places that are special to the couple. In the living room (opposite), Jason painted the bump-out wall in a charcoal hue—Rock Bottom by Sherwin-Williams—to further define the area as a focal point.



Jason painted the window frames the same charcoal color as the fireplace bump-out. "I wanted something bold and daring," he says.

The limited edition serigraph print—titled "Un Signe de la Main" by artist Michel Delacroix—is from the estate sale of Twin Cities sports personality George "Dark Star" Chapple.

To balance the classic elements of their home, including those nearly 12-foot-tall ceilings, the couple filled rooms with modern furniture acquired during sales from their favorite stores, like West Elm, Jonathan Adler, and IKEA. The 72-by-72-inch coffee table and wood-carved mirror on the mantel are from Restoration Hardware.



When you're inside the home of Jason and Megan Gonzalez, it's hard to believe that you're inside a house built in the 1980s in a first-tier suburb of St. Paul.

It's more like you've stepped into a sophisticated penthouse in a downtown hotel.

"We love staying at nice hotels, so we wanted to create that feeling here," says Jason of their inspiration, which comes to life in the luxurious marble flooring, crown molding flecked with gold, and crystal chandeliers that came with the home when they bought it.

When Jason and Megan began looking for their first home, they didn't have a particular city or neighborhood in mind. After living in a downtown Minneapolis condo for three years, they were simply ready for more space with high ceilings, big windows, and room for their out-of-town family to visit.

Jason, a sports reporter for the *Star Tribune*, researched thousands of houses online. They toured dozens in-person—sometimes up to 10 in one weekend—and even put in an offer on a house in Minnetonka before finding their dream home in Roseville. "As soon as we walked in, we knew," says Megan, founder and creative director of MaeMae & Co. "It had only been on the market for three days, and we put an offer in that day."

Despite the work that had to be done—removing the wallpaper that covered nearly every inch of the home that wasn't already covered in pink carpeting



Jason and Megan installed much of this IKEA kitchen themselves—from the sleek white cabinetry and butcher block countertops to the hanging planters.



(also removed), renovating the bathroom and kitchen—the pair saw the potential. “We could see everything—the way we would put our touch on it and make it our own,” Megan says. “We weren’t purposefully trying to find the fixer-upper, but we weren’t afraid of renovation. We knew we could change anything we needed to.”

The day after the papers were signed in May 2015, the couple began stripping wallpaper, and by the time they moved in two months later, all the painting and flooring was complete. That, however, was when the real work began.

A self-described HGTV addict, Jason has the “if they can do it, I can do it” mentality. Beyond installing



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appliances and hiring contractor Brian Zabrok of Aspire Builders, Inc. to solidify the blueprints, coordinate with subcontractors, and obtain permits, the homeowners did much of the remodeling and all of the decorating themselves, including their biggest project: the kitchen.

“The kitchen felt more like a maid’s quarters before. It felt so different from the rest of the home,” Megan says. To modernize the space, they knocked down a U-shaped counter, creating a more open floor plan. An old wooden floor was replaced with a new one—balanced by white cabinets, stainless steel appliances, and butcher block countertops—while open shelving houses a collection of white and copper dishware. “I love that my kitchen feels like my own little studio,”

she says. “I have always liked cooking, but never made the space for it.”

In the master suite, Jason and Megan love the double doors that open to reveal a spacious bedroom with floor-to-ceiling windows just off the sunken living room. The bathroom, however, felt cramped and outdated. By reconfiguring the space, the pair made room for a large rain head shower, “in keeping with the hotel vibe.” They replaced the old tub with a sleek, freestanding bath, and put down marble tile where more pink carpet had been. The room’s chandelier came with the house—another example of how the couple married the best parts of what existed with their modern sensibility.

MaeMae & Co. started as a stationery company, but today Megan works as a creative director for clients including Minted, Brit + Co, The Mrs. Box, Patyka, and LAB MPLS. Jason’s Emmy, which he won in 2013 for his documentary on South High in Minneapolis, sits on a shelf in the couple’s shared home office.



In the bedroom, an original chandelier and crown molding are complemented by Michel Delacroix art and more modern touches, like the standing lamps from IKEA and the end table from Room & Board. Pink carpet and a tub with a swan's head in the bathroom were replaced with items that reflect the style of the rest of the home, such as marble tile from The Tile Shop and a freestanding tub from Signature Hardware.



“You need to identify what makes your home special,” says Jason. “Build off pieces that are already here, and go from there.” For the Gonzalezes, that means leaving wallpaper untouched in areas like the laundry room and closets, playing up the original crown molding by keeping the majority of walls neutral, and showcasing the elegant chandeliers that decorate nearly every room—hesitant to let them go even after receiving a monetary offer for them from a woman who toured the home when it was on the market.

They still have plans for other areas, like the basement, deck, and garage, but for now the couple is focusing on a new service offered through MaeMae & Co.: interior design. Throughout the remodel, Megan and Jason documented their progress on Instagram and Snapchat, which resulted in the pair landing a job designing a member's lounge in Minneapolis. “We love interior design now, and we love to make things beautiful—whether that's relationships or a home,” Jason says. “Your home is so personal.” ■



“There's no particular formula to follow,” Megan says about balancing scale in a room. “It's about pairing contrasting items—something big with something small, something shiny with something that has texture—until you find a combination that works.”