



# BETTER TOGETHER





She's a fan of shabby-chic and loves feminine lines; he prefers modern industrial and is color averse. Here's how a Denver designer broke down the metaphorical barriers of one couple's opposing styles to make their sprawling Cherry Hills home feel cohesive and cozy.

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When a thirtysomething couple enlisted **Duet Design Group** co-founder Devon Tobin to help them furnish their new Cherry Hills home, she knew exactly what she was getting into—because she'd worked on their former University Park house as well. This 7,500-square-foot home, however, brought the task of melding the duo's divergent tastes—she loves a soft, feminine vibe; he leans modern—to a whole new scale. But far from being daunted by the challenge, Tobin credits that tension with making the home so dynamic. "It's not often that a couple is this kind of polar opposites," she says. "But they get that their differences are so opposing that the only way to bridge them is to compromise." We talked to Tobin about balancing styles, delineating comfortable spaces in a large footprint, and taking risks.

**5280 Home: What were the couple's wishes for this house?**

**Devon Tobin:** They wanted a kind of eclectic, luxe feel in an industrial, very livable space—down to the wood floors with natural distressing [to accommodate their] really active dogs. The home is grand, but it's also cozy.

**How did the couple's divergent styles influence your design?**

He prefers modern-industrial, but she likes feminine, shabby-chic style with industrial touches. She loves color; he does not. And they're aware of these differences: For example, they decided to separate their closets because she said, "I want a pink closet," and his response was, "I can't imagine getting ready anywhere worse."



*Facing page and previous spread:* Large globe lights help tame the volume of the library/office, which contains thousands of tomes. Although interior designer Devon Tobin wanted to arrange the books by appearance, the homeowners insisted that they be categorized by subject matter. "They are genuine readers," Tobin says. "There are no fake books in this house."

*Top:* Tobin used concrete around the range hood to balance the lavish marble on the islands. A light, swinging metal door with a porthole-esque window gives way to the pantry.

*Previous spread:* Recognizing that a fancy, 60-inch chandelier in the entry would be too over the top for these homeowners, Tobin created an installation comprising dozens of hanging pendants that create a candlelit effect. A leather tread inset protects the wood stairs and provides a slip-free surface for the couple's large dogs.

*Above:* Denver-based Architectural Workshop designed the home.

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*Right:* A collection of zinc wall planters makes an artful installation in the chic, casual living room, which opens to an outdoor living space.

*Left:* "It was the perfect space to do something out-of-control unique," Tobin says of this long, narrow powder room. Its walls are clad in a suede Phillip Jeffries wallcovering with reflective, painted studs.



*Right:* The staggered transition from hexagonal Ragno porcelain tiles to hardwood was a product of functional and aesthetic demands. "I'm doing this type of application more often now, [with transitions happening] more organically than they used to," Tobin says. "Wood floors are challenging in Colorado; the second they get wet and snowy, they can get ruined."



*Left:* Tobin originally designed the dining room's fireplace wall—which features graffitied tiles she found on Etsy—years ago for the couple's previous home. "We knew they weren't going to stay there forever, so I had it fabricated so it just screwed into the floor and ceiling," Tobin says. She created the gallery wall relatively inexpensively—using book pages with images printed over them from Artwordz—so that the couple could upgrade the area with investment-grade art later on. The custom-made table, about 4 feet wide and 12 feet long, was built for the large dinner parties the homeowners love to host.





**Did they have strong opinions about other design details?**

She's a great cook, and she knew exactly how she wanted her kitchen laid out; she didn't need a typical working triangle. I found out later that she was at a dinner where she met [Ina Garten], the Barefoot Contessa, who said, "An ideal kitchen looks like this." I was like, "That's where this [approach] came from?!" I love that though, because it ups my game. Also, the homeowner loves exotic granites and marbles—but we didn't fully waterfall the islands because her husband didn't want them to feel too extravagant.

**It must be difficult to make a house this large feel cozy.**

I think it helps that [the structure is] longer—a lot of homes tend to go up, but we were able to span more length. The only room that has major volume is the library; the homeowners are both *Harry Potter* fanatics, and they wanted a *Harry Potter* library. You can feel the volume there and in the entry, but everything else takes on a more intimate feel. It didn't get that open-floorplan treatment.

**Why not?**

We divided spaces without physically closing them off. The problem [with open floor plans] is that functions bleed [from space to space], and that's not always what people want. For example, you don't really want where you're having cereal to be where you're having popcorn and watching a movie—which is why I used the fireplace to divide the living room from the breakfast nook.

**From the wallpapered ceiling in her craft room to the staggered transition from hardwood to tile in the mudroom, there are some really unique treatments in the home. How fun was that for you?**

This was one of those dream projects where I [could take] risks I know are risks. Even in my head, I was like, "I know this works, but it is out there." This couple was excited to try these ideas—and that's why you hire designers. We're supposed to push your level of comfort. I always tell people, "If your stomach is turning a little bit, go with it."



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*Left:* An abstract-watercolor wallcovering from Area Environments creates a kind of headboard wall in the master bedroom. The bed, handmade by the owner and his father from slabs of narra hardwood, is a rustic counterpoint.



*Above:* Because the couple opted for separate closets, Tobin didn't have to bring the industrial elements he favors into *her* space. Instead, she went full glam with cabinetry painted in Benjamin Moore's Desert Rose, a dedicated makeup station, and a sparkly light fixture from Visual Comfort.

*Facing page:* The craft room's high, pitched ceiling needed something dynamic, so Tobin selected a vibrant sisal grasscloth wallcovering from Lindsay Cowles. "I have been coveting this artist for so many years," Tobin says. "It's loud and epic; we didn't use that kind of color anywhere else in the house." 🏠



*Left:* Though the homeowners were initially worried this Zen master bath would be too small, Tobin says it's an ideal size: "It's so profoundly functional. There's no dance floor." The dark floor and shower tile is balanced by the bright white countertop and tub and woodlike hexagonal tile from Porcelanosa.

### DESIGN PROS

#### Architecture:

Architectural Workshop

**Interior design:** Devon Tobin,

Duet Design Group

**Construction:** C4