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ARTISTS  
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DAISY [GATSBY]  
VS.  
LISBETH [PUNK]

DESIGNER  
JULIE DODSON'S  
GLAMOROUS  
LEANINGS.

PHOTOGRAPH SHAYNA FONTANA. HAIR & MAKEUP KATE YANCEY. STYLIST CARLOS ALONSO PARADA FOR ON SET MANAGEMENT, DALLAS. SET DESIGN PHILLIP MCVEAN.  
FACET SLICE SCULPTURE BY GEORGE SELLERS.

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# A DESIGNER'S DREAM

DECORATOR **JULIE DODSON** PULLS OUT THE STOPS FOR A GLAMOROUS MEMORIAL-AREA HOUSE WITH RUSTIC LEANINGS.



## EVERYBODY SHOULD BE SO LUCKY.

Out of the blue, a young interior designer with a promising portfolio gets a referral. The builder of a grand, one-off house has recommended her to the homeowners. The wife pays a visit to the designer's office, spends half an hour looking at some photos of past work, takes a quick reading of the vibes (one presumes), and announces, "Okay, you're hired."

The chemistry indeed turns out right. Everybody involved is thrilled with the designer's work. But, wait — it gets better. In the year-and-a-half course of it all, she and the couple become close friends. This is a dividend of doing business that simply can't be quantified. And in a profession where judgments are subjective and client relationships can be fraught, it's a bonus that is never guaranteed.

"I started my company when I was 26," says Julie Dodson, the designer, who just turned 37. "I've had really great projects, but I have never had one of this magnitude. It was that difference-making project that you dream of as a designer. And I had such a great experience working with them. For so long, I took on every single project that I could because I love designing and creating. But I learned through experience that taking on too much can get you into trouble. And I learned to choose people I'm going to like working with." How fortunate is Dodson to be able to reach that conclusion based on a positive experience, rather than a regrettable one.

Architecturally, the house strikes a delicate balance between weightiness and buoyancy: stone, slate, patina-ed brick and heavy timbers on the one hand; soaring ceilings, light-flooded spaces and a flowing plan on the other. Dodson's challenge for the interior was attaining an equally harmonious expression

**ABOVE:** In the living room, a concrete sculpture of a deer, found at Round Top, sits before a Robert Deyber oil, *Night Light*, purchased from Martin Lawrence Gallery in Newport Beach. More wildlife: the silvery color of the Edelman Leather Royal Hide covering the pair of Dennis & Leen fauteuils is called Catbird. French oak flooring from Custom Floors.

**LEFT:** In a hallway, the pair of acrylic chandeliers is from Allan Knight in Dallas. Limestone flooring from Chateau Domingue.

BY JONATHAN LERNER. ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN ROBERT DAME.  
PHOTOGRAPHY JACK THOMPSON.





of the couple's personalities. "He loves the mountains and to hunt. She has this breezy Southern California girl in her," Dodson says. "They vacation on the West Coast every summer, and I wanted the house to have that feel, rustic yet sophisticated. But casual — they're just happy people."

Dodson was going for a touch of the Hollywood Regency style. The symmetries and formal elements she used do speak to the grandeur of the house, but her design lacks the mannered — not to say compulsive — over-the-top quality of that aesthetic. And if it's not exactly minimalist, what she has done with the house is certainly understated. The interior is like a taut white canvas splashed here and there with luxurious golds and daubed with woody browns — and flaunting, every once in a while and just where you wouldn't expect it, a surrealist doodle. Such as the tromp l'oeil tented ceiling in the pool bathroom, about which Dodson says, "The ceiling got lost when it was the same color as the wall. I wanted to add the feel of an old French circus tent, loose and draped." Or the damask pattern stenciled onto the loft stairway in one of the children's bedrooms. "I don't know where this stuff comes from, out of my brain," she says, perhaps dissembling. Let's just call it originality.

Another of her unconventional moves was the extensive use of indoor-outdoor fabric on upholstered pieces, Link Outdoor's Twill acrylic in sugar white. "They have three girls. They entertain a lot. And it's very durable," she says. The homeowners also happen to be serious wine collectors. So, can people spill red wine all over the furniture and live to tell the tale? "Yeah, I actually did that," Dodson says. "It wiped right off."

It would take a number of fingers and toes to count the chandeliers in this house — and also to detail their various periods and styles. "Lighting was huge," Dodson says. "We probably went a little overboard as far as budget is concerned. But it makes such a statement, it's like the jewelry on a house. The lighting can make a room really special."

Of her clients, Dodson says, "They really trusted me, even when I doubted myself. That's a designer's biggest fault sometimes. Every now and then, you get this moment of insecurity in making a decision. But they had 100 percent confidence. And even when they didn't, they'd say, 'Okay, let's just do it.'" And we suspect they have no regrets.

**TOP:** The master bedroom curtains are of a Zimmer Rhode silk called Colibri. Custom embroidery on the valance was done by Villa Savoia. The Art Deco bronze figure was purchased at Swenson Gallery in Laguna Beach. The painted abstract panel faces its other half; they began life together as a freestanding screen at John Saladino's New York showroom, purchased on impulse and without a plan for its use.

**LEFT:** The quirky stool with sheep's legs and a sheepskin cushion, was found in the field at Round Top. The homeowners call it their "little Fraggile Rock." Chandelier from Area.





“Lighting makes such a **statement**. It’s like the jewelry on a house.”

— Julie Dodson

TOP: The Bronze Mother chandelier, composed of laser-cut rings and chains, is a Baylar Atelier design from Hudson Furniture. Antique fireplace surround from Chateau Domingue. Mirror from Joyce Horn Antiques.  
 BOTTOM LEFT: The 19th-century Genoese chandelier in the entry was purchased at Round Top from Brian Kelly of Atlanta’s B. Kelley Antiques. The mirror is from Area. Settee, candle stand and stool are all from MAI.  
 BOTTOM RIGHT: Segreto Finishes translated Dodson’s idea for damask patterning on the loft stairs in the youngest daughter’s bedroom. “She’s a sporty kind of girl who’s going to take over the world, and I wanted it to be fun and different,” Dodson says. Uptown Girl shag carpeting from Creative Flooring Resources. Curtain fabric is Bergius from Designers Guild’s Sofienberg collection. Headboard fabricated to Dodson’s design by the Joseph Company.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:

The Chinese scenic wallpaper in the dining room, hand-painted in the 18th-century style, is from Gracie. Dodson's choice of the relatively delicate starburst mirror? "I didn't want anything too massive — the wallpaper is so awesome." The pair of lamps is fashioned from wooden architectural fragments. Lacquer buffet from Shabby Slips.

Wallpaper in the powder room is Twig's Corteccia — which means "bar" in Italian — in a custom color. The petrified-wood-look sink was found in the field at Round Top.

Designer Julie Dodson on a settee from MAI, which was also the source of the candle stand and stool. The 19th-century Genoese chandelier in the entry foyer was purchased at Round Top from Brian Kelly of Atlanta's B. Kelley Antiques. The mirror is from Area.

An antique daybed in the family room, from Shabby Slips, plays off John Saladino's asymmetrical Santa Barbara sofa. The antique French fireplace surround is from Chateau Domingue.

The middle daughter "is just a fashion queen, a girly girl. She has every issue of *Teen Vogue* ever," the designer says. For her bedroom wall, Dodson had her initials embroidered onto painted linen panels. A pillow is covered in Osborne and Little's geometric Balyan fabric. Bed linens by Ann Gish.

A pair of Baker Christal chandeliers lights up the kitchen. The stools were fashioned from Brace and Black acrylic side tables, with cushions of Lelievre's Zibeline faux leather.

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