

# NEW DESIGN, *old-world charm*

Interior designer **Jessica Helgerson** brings contemporary flair to a unique Portland home

Written by RACHEL GALLAGHER  
Photographed by LINCOLN BARBOUR



**stats**  
**who:** JESSICA HELGERSON  
**what:** interior design

**details:** Jessica Helgerson Interior Design is based in Portland, but the company has worked on projects across the country. The firm takes a flexible approach to interior design, and each designer works closely with clients to create beautifully livable spaces. JHID respects historical architecture and works to bring a modern twist to vintage design.



**OPPOSITE:** When remodeling this Mediterranean home in Portland, interior designer Jessica Helgerson kept the integrity of the original architecture by using archways (modeled after the one in the entryway) to connect various rooms. **THIS PAGE:** Creamy white walls contrast warmly against thick, wooden ceiling beams.



Helgerson balanced the dark masculinity of the living room (left) by adding splashes of bright, feminine color. The walnut coffee table is a custom JHID design, built by Portland woodworker **Allen Kinast**. The dark leather chairs are also a custom JHID design. **ABOVE:** The light fixture in the dining room is original to the house, and the designer formerly owned the dining table.

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HEN A HOUSE HAS GOOD BONES, most interior designers know to leave well enough alone. So when *Jessica Helgerson*, principal of Jessica Helgerson Interior Design first saw Tim and Sonia Bergler's 1930s Mediterranean-style home in southeast Portland, she was excited to work within the existing layout.





"I grew up in Santa Barbara and had an office there for a number of years," Helgerson says. "I hadn't seen an arch or a thick wall in Portland, so this was like coming home for me. I love the Mediterranean style."

The homeowners were also fans of their home's style but were looking to update their cramped and dated kitchen, as well as other areas of the house. "We wanted something that was consistent with the period and architecture of the home but also a little bit modern," Tim explains.

The old kitchen was dysfunctional, Helgerson says, with a cumbersome island that made it difficult for the homeowners to open the oven door. It was also difficult for the entire family (the Berglers have two children) to gather in the kitchen and cook together.

Working closely with the Berglers, Helgerson opted to remove an existing wall between the kitchen and the breakfast nook in order to open up the space. She also nixed a narrow doorway that led to the dining room, substituting it for an open archway consistent with the home's architecture. The island was removed, and stainless-steel countertops were replaced with earthy, walnut slabs. The homeowners found an elegant gray-and-white tile that lends warmth to the mostly white space.

In the living room, Helgerson used the dark wood of the exposed ceiling



**OPPOSITE:** The designer originally considered wood floors in the kitchen but went with the gray-and-white *Ann Sacks* Pechin tile. Two red steel *Tolix* chairs bring a modern touch to the Calcutta marble table and imported French light fixtures. **ABOVE:** Two more red chairs from *Fermob* sit at the entryway to the Berglers' white brick home.



beams to inform the neutral color palette, adding splashes of bold orange and fuchsia to liven the space. Minimal décor allows the striking beams to stand out but not in an ostentatious way.

"When I first went over there, the walls were mustard yellow and white," the designer recalls. "I persuaded the homeowners to paint them this creamy color, which really warms the space." Sonia says the paint color is surprisingly something that guests notice and compliment.

To provide clients with a unique style, Helgerson often finds vintage pieces for her rooms, and the Berglers' space is no exception. The show-stopper in the living room is a 10-foot-long church bench found on eBay that Helgerson upholstered, turning it into a contemporary sofa. Vintage chairs in the dining area were also reupholstered in bright pink and fuchsia to tie them in with the sofa.

The redecorated space embraces old-world charm, featuring some of the diverse items from the Berglers' travels. The living room curtains incorporate antique tapestries, and the artsy lamp in Sonia's office was imported from Turkey.

"We could have never have designed this place ourselves," Tim says. "We found some of the materials for the project, and Jessica helped us incorporate them without overdoing it. There's a lot of masculine quality to the dark wood, wrought iron, and dark doors, but the space also has very fresh look, which is exactly what we were looking for."



**OPPOSITE:** Fuchsia **Tolix** stools sit beneath a one-of-a-kind glass Turkish light fixture in Sonia's office. The designer hand-painted orange designs on the wall. **THIS PAGE:** A new, organized mudroom replaced a formerly crowded storage area. The dark wood bench echoes the overhead beams in the living room, and another fixture from France provides optional light.