



BOHOME CHIC
Clockwise from far left: A view from the second-floor balcony to the dining and deck areas; Bailes relaxes on a leather midcentury modern chair in her living room; a molded plywood rocking chair find from a thrift store; upstairs the fuchsia walls and red patterned rug act as an Asian-inspired backdrop; a souvenir sculpture from Bailes' travels



Made in England

A Logan Square townhome on the Chicago River plays backdrop to an eccentric English transplant.

By Tate Gunnerson | Photography by Anthony Tahlier

Growing up in Brampton—a small village outside of Cambridge—Hilary Bailes enjoyed exploring derelict grand mansions that looked like something out of the popular PBS series *Downton Abbey*. “I loved seeing the interiors, gardens and conservatories,” says Bailes, a Chicago-based interior designer. Bailes developed an appreciation for historical trends from her father, an antiques dealer whom she often accompanied on scouting trips that took them everywhere from small auctions in the English countryside to major sales at Sotheby’s and Christie’s in London. “He would employ me in the summer, so I learned how to upholster and repair furniture,” Bailes recalls.

This storied upbringing cultivated an aesthetic that can shift dramatically depending on the needs of the client—and Bailes’ mood. “Each project is different for me,” the Brit explains. “If there were a set of rules, I’d just want to break them.” Having moved to Chicago from London in the late ’70s, Bailes founded her firm, Hilary Bailes Design, almost a decade later and took on a hodgepodge of jobs—everything from studio apartments to an immense corporate headquarters of an Oakbrook-based retailer.

In her 2,600-square-foot Logan Square townhome, Bailes blends contemporary, vintage and one-of-a-kind pieces against a neutral palette of warm gray walls and ebony-stained hardwood floors punctuated by artwork and unexpected jolts of color such as the hot pink hallway on the second floor. “You have a core and then many different layers,” Bailes explains. In the living room, a contemporary low-slung black leather sectional sits side by side with a molded plywood rocking chair that she bought at a thrift store years ago. “The design is so simple, but it looks like a piece of art,” Bailes says. “I appreciate the brains behind it.” The mix of influences continues in the dining area, where traditional dining chairs upholstered in gray velvet contrast the long, white Saarinen Tulip table. An oversize chandelier emphasizes the lofted ceilings and draws attention to the wall of windows overlooking the Chicago River. “Coming home at night makes me feel comfortable—I’m surrounded by things that I love. It’s not perfect, but that’s me,” Bailes says.

While dad taught her about antiques, Bailes’ mother introduced her to high fashion during shopping excursions on Carnaby Street in London. “There’s a lot of inspiration in fashion—the haute couture, the bright colors, the textures,” Bailes recalls. “It was all very Bohemian, and I loved it.”

With so many influences informing her style schema, it’s no surprise that the home’s furnishings and fixtures cannot be attributed to one artistic era. Still, the affinity for more transitional periods related to societal changes is obvious. “Victorian to Arts and Crafts to Bauhaus: Innovation is stimulating,” Bailes says, pointing to the punk rock movement as a prime example. “Things have stagnated a bit. A lot of people think they can buy everything from a catalog and yes—it looks OK—but it has no sense of individuality or history. Your home should tell a story.” ■