

# The Art of the Mix

Ditch typical for topical with one design maven's guidelines for adding a bit of modern to staid interiors

/// BY BRADLEY LINCOLN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY NATHAN KIRKMAN

Dark glass hurricane cylinders update the candelabra

A white lacquer chair adds pop

Sisal brightens the room

This Spun lamp, the acrylic serving tray, and the desk chair form a visual triangle of mod



Shelley Johnstone doesn't like to play by the rules. The Lake Forest-based interior designer has built her reputation on challenging the predictable, safe approach many people cling to when furnishing their homes, creating quirky spaces while respecting clients' heirlooms and comfort zones. "I hate matchy-matchy anything, whether it's a dining room set or an outfit," she says. "People should relax with their homes, mix styles together, have fun."

Johnstone frequently works on North Shore estates designed by such architectural greats as Daniel Burnham and Howard Van Doren Shaw—traditional homes with top-shelf bones, which often come with museum-quality furniture and works of art that clients are not about to shelve away in storage. For those who want to get on trend without doing a complete home makeover, she refreshes rooms with unexpected modern elements and materials, often from surprisingly modest sources, introducing the Adlers David and Jonathan in spirit.

She recently showed us what she'd do to integrate contemporary touches into a traditional interior at the Edward Ferrell/Lewis Mittman showroom in the Merchandise Mart, getting a very different effect without replacing most of the furniture or changing the wall color. And she passed along a few tips that will work for any space, on any budget.

## Include new takes on old ideas.

The black leather and metal Barcelona chairs perfectly embody this philosophy. "Mies van der Rohe created these iconic, cool chairs for the king and queen of Spain [for the German Pavilion at

the 1929 International Exposition in Barcelona]," she explains, "and now they are used in offices and lobbies everywhere. I love that. The beautifully tufted leather seats are an updated version of a traditional upholstery technique, like

BEFORE

