

[REAL ESTATE](#) / [HOUSES](#)

Celebrity Fashion Stylist's Cool, Contemporary Dallas Home Embraces its '70s Vibes

Nini Nguyen Counts Rihanna Among Her Clients and Puts Together a Room—with Designer James McInroe — Like Any Great Outfit

BY [REBECCA SHERMAN](#)
PHOTOGRAPHY LISA PETROLE
JAN 31, 2020



In the dining area, Counter stools from Sunpan. (Photo by Lisa Petrole)

Personal stylist Nini Nguyen — who counts Rihanna as a client —

is understandably confident about her sartorial chops. So is *Vanity Fair*, which named her as its first Best-Dressed Challenge User’s Choice winner. *Harper’s Bazaar* Vietnam has featured her work, and worldwide fans of her Instagram page, [Nini Style](#), salivate over her signature vintage-meets-luxury look.

But when she and her husband, photographer Loc Truong, moved into a new house last year just north of LBJ Freeway, Nguyen was in uncharted territory. The 1970s-era contemporary had “great feng shui, great energy,” she recalls. “But it needed a lot of fixing up.” Plus, with two young children, the couple needed new furniture.

“When it comes to fashion, I know exactly what to do, but I’m clueless about interior design,” she says. “I’d buy a chair, but then I was, like, ‘Where do I put that?’ ”

A longtime client stepped in to help, gifting Nguyen with a consultation with interior designer [James McInroe](#), who had previously decorated the client’s own residence. Nguyen and McInroe were a perfect match from the start. “I like drama, but I also like clean and classic,” Nguyen says. McInroe is known for imbuing rooms with the kind of tension that comes from unexpected color combinations and a mix of modern and neoclassical furnishings. “When James came to the house, he looked around and immediately knew what to do,” she says. “He had a vision.”

McInroe's plan included keeping many of the house's cool '70s details, including the entry's modernist stained-glass window, built-in brick planter, and original glass chandelier. The *Brady Bunch*-era teak staircase couldn't have been more perfect. In fact, the house's retro interior architecture seemed made to order for this creative couple, who love vintage. With vaulted ceilings, multiple levels, and an open floor plan that envelops the kitchen, living, and dining rooms, the interiors feel as fresh as they did 50 years ago. McInroe brought it all into the 21st century with new hardware, doors, and polished-concrete floors. And, with a new skin of concrete, a dated brick fireplace in the living area became a sculptural statement.

**“BLACK HELPS UNIFY TRIM THAT’S NOT PERFECTLY MATCHED AND MAKES IT MUCH MORE STYLISH,”
MCINROE SAYS.**

McInroe's next decision surprised Nguyen: Paint all the ironwork and doors black. “Black helps unify trim that’s not perfectly matched and makes it much more stylish,” McInroe says. It wasn't a color Nguyen had considered — her wardrobe is full of colorful frocks. She originally envisioned a white-and-gray scheme for her home. “But he totally changed my mind,” she says. “I had no idea black could be so dramatic. That’s when I realized that if I want a beautiful house, I’d better listen to James.”

Nguyen's initial consultation with McInroe quickly grew into a bigger design project when she hired him to advise on new furnishings and artwork.

“She has great personal style — I have several clients who use her styling services — so it was easy to see what she liked,” McInroe recalls. “Her fashion sense is about fresh combinations with a bright, young feel.”

To stay within budget, Nguyen did a lot of the legwork herself, hunting for furniture online and in vintage stores. Each one had to get McInroe's stamp of approval before making its way home. “Even if I loved it, if James didn't think it worked, I didn't buy it,” Nguyen says.

....

Nguyen understands the positive effect that a skillfully styled wardrobe can have on her clients — that's her job, after all — and now she also understands the magic that a professional interior designer can create at home.

“I can't imagine what this house would have looked like without James,” she says. “We are so happy with it. It was a blessing to have this house, and another blessing to have James decorate it. It's a beauty.”