

DECEMBER 2005

cottageLiving®

COMFORT **SIMPLICITY** STYLE

cozy up in style!

DECORATE

Inviting looks
for the season

INDULGE

Best ever
chocolate cakes

WELCOME

Great guest rooms

cottageliving.com
AOL Keyword: Cottage Living

\$3.99 US



72440 10458 7



The ultimate
gingerbread
cottage



Between flea-market visits and cups of coffee, Sasha Emerson helped her neighbors create a California cottage that looks stylish, not “decorated”

“I CALL IT OVER-TH

INSTEAD OF GOING UP WITH A SECOND STORY, THE COUPLE BUILT BACK into the hillside for their master bedroom addition. They added skylights to give the house more natural light and rebuilt the chimney, covering it in metal for modern appeal. **THE KIDS KEEP BOOTS AND FLIP-FLOPS HANDY** in the entry, which “serves as a mudroom,” says Sasha.



IT ALL BEGAN WITH A YOUNG COUPLE, an old cottage, and a pair of orange chairs. In 1996, a Los Angeles writer and his wife, a former film editor, fell for the house with its storybook eaves and colorful past. Built in the 1920s, it was part of an enclave called the Uplifters Ranch, where businessmen went to drink, ride horses, and put on plays during Prohibition. Over time, the house grew from two to six rooms, shaded by scrubby California live oaks. Admittedly, the place was dark, but the couple saw potential in its vintage details and hired L.A. architects Marmol Radziner and Associates to help preserve its charm while updating it.

Since the couple's second child was on the way, the architects gave them additional living space, replaced the 1930s kitchen, and built a bedroom wing that ascends uphill to overlook the wooded canyon. To add airiness to the rustic living room, they introduced skylights and extra windows.

Into this sunny space went a hodgepodge of furnishings: a turquoise sofa, a green secondhand chair, a 1950s coffee table inherited from a relative. “We were still living like grad students,” recalls the wife, laughing. “On the other hand, we didn’t want

E-HEDGE DESIGN”



the house to look like we'd hired a decorator."

Luckily, just around the corner, lived Sasha Emerson, a designer. She began advising them on little things: "I call it over-the-hedge design," she says. She helped choose fabric for lampshades, designed a crewelwork ottoman for them, rearranged what furniture they had, and offered the ultimate designer gift—a second opinion. Then one day, just back from a flea market trip, she dropped in with two curved orange chairs from the 1960s that she thought would suit her friends' taste and help offset the room's angles. "We'll re-cover them," she promised, assuming they would hate the orange.

At first they did. But after a week, they realized it made them happy. Since the fabric was worn, they did re-upholster the chairs—in an even brighter orange velvet. "Color adds life; it's inspiring," says Sasha, who often counsels clients to find a favorite painting or vintage postcard and build a color palette around it. In this case, the crewelwork was the key: The orange chairs happened to match a swirl in the fabric; another swirl—blue—offered a complementary tone, which led to the choice of blue leather for an old green chair and a blue stripe for the sofa. The message? "Cottage decor doesn't have to be muted, English, or country," Sasha explains. It

"Good decorating is about

“THIS ISN’T A HUGE HOUSE, but the ceilings in the living room [shown here] and dining room and kitchen are 20 feet high,” says Sasha. The owners enlivened the space with fabrics and artwork. Sasha brought the colors together with a crewelwork-covered ottoman (left). “I wanted to use one fussy fabric,” she says. “The ottoman’s shape keeps the look modern.”



fantasy and personality more than imitation or rules”



THE COUPLE RECONFIGURED AND EXPANDED THEIR GALLEY KITCHEN

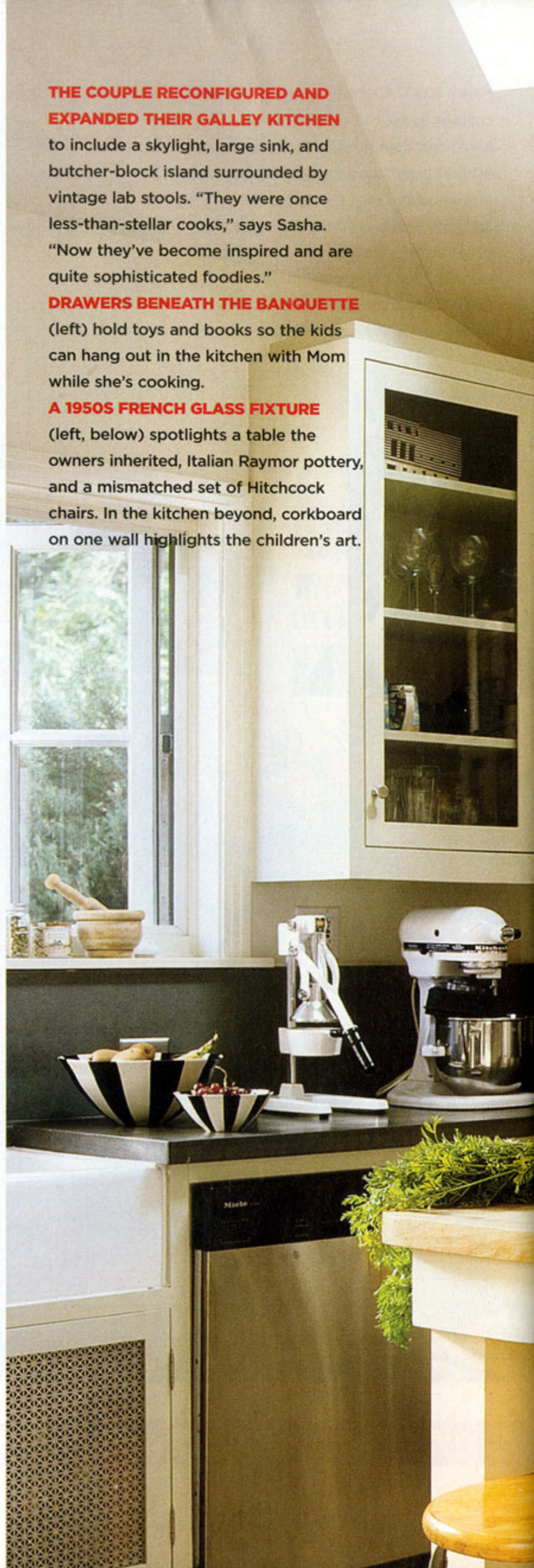
to include a skylight, large sink, and butcher-block island surrounded by vintage lab stools. "They were once less-than-stellar cooks," says Sasha. "Now they've become inspired and are quite sophisticated foodies."

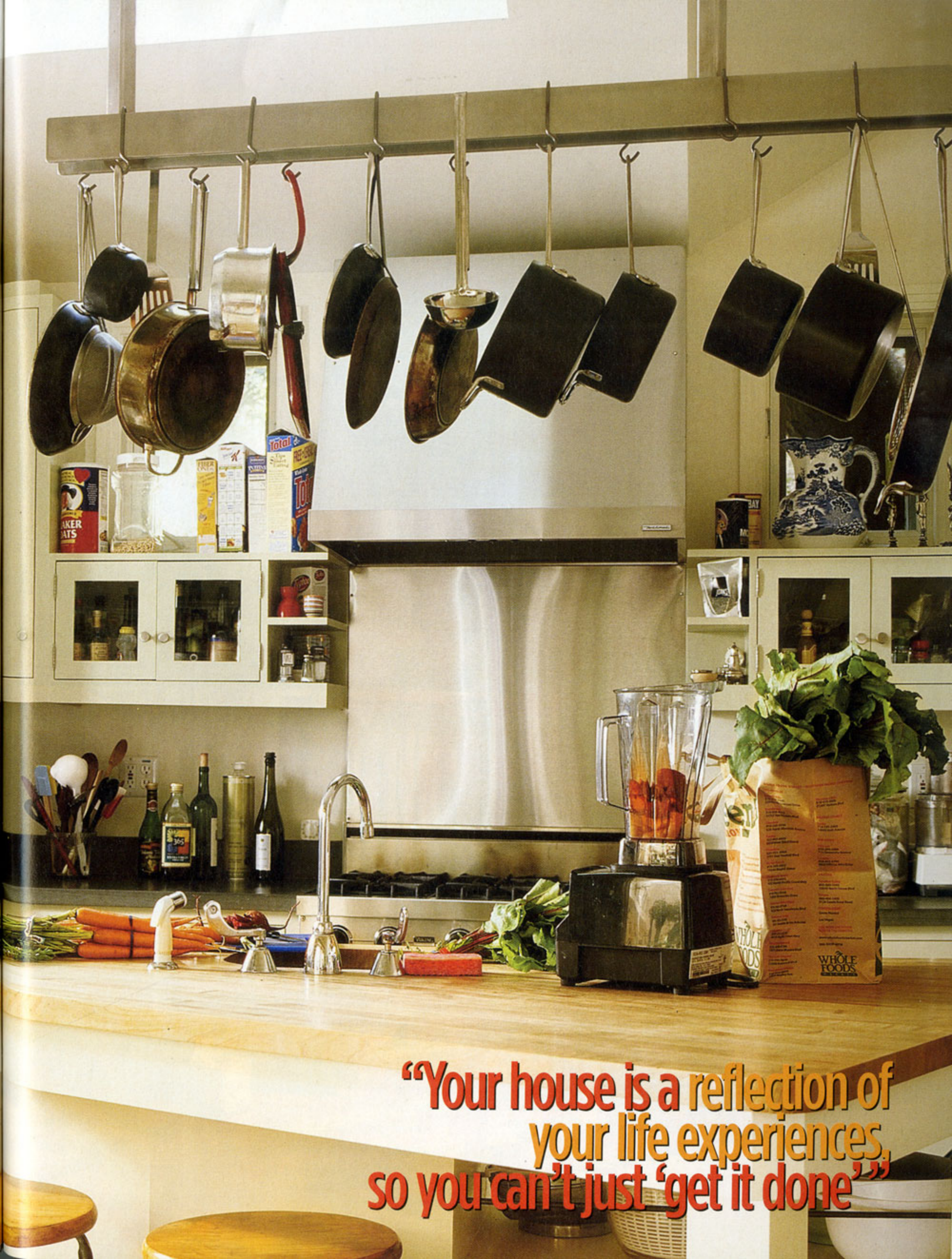
DRAWERS BENEATH THE BANQUETTE

(left) hold toys and books so the kids can hang out in the kitchen with Mom while she's cooking.

A 1950S FRENCH GLASS FIXTURE

(left, below) spotlights a table the owners inherited, Italian Raymor pottery, and a mismatched set of Hitchcock chairs. In the kitchen beyond, corkboard on one wall highlights the children's art.





“Your house is a reflection of your life experiences, so you can’t just ‘get it done.’”

FACTORY-STYLE CASEMENT

WINDOWS, hinged at the top, open easily to take advantage of breezes in the reading nook off the new master bedroom.



A METAL-CLAD STAIRCASE leads up to the new addition—master bedroom, bath, and walk-in closet.

LIKE A TREEHOUSE, the new reading nook (right) opens onto a porch with serene views.



can veer in many directions, including simple mid-20th-century shapes that blend well with antiques, found objects, and contemporary art. “Good decorating,” Sasha says, “is about fantasy and personality more than imitation or rules.”

Her neighbors have strong tastes. They’ve traveled, amassed books, and collected paintings made for them by artist friends. The husband himself paints—the smiling fish above the fireplace are his—and throughout the house, he and his wife hang drawings by their children, now 6 and 9.

The couple instructed the architects to “keep the cottage feel and refer to it in our addition, but don’t just create a mock-old-fashioned house.” The kitchen, for example, features wooden cupboards and a comfy window seat, but the appliances are modern stainless steel.

No part of this house is too fancy for a child. Playing is encouraged even in the living room, where there’s a storage bench—complete with cushioned seats—for games. “Children need to be considered in this process,” says Sasha, who has three of her own. But given the constant evolution of family life, that process is never finished, according to her neighbor: “Your house is a reflection of your life experiences, so you can’t just ‘get it done.’ We let this house unfold.” ■

TAKE IT FROM SASHA

■ **USE WHAT YOU HAVE.** In the living room, Sasha’s neighbors had a turquoise sofa, a secondhand reading chair, and an inherited coffee table. Instead of starting over, they rearranged to create a more inviting seating area and added a few new pieces—like the orange chairs that spruce things up a bit.

■ **UNCOVER THE POTENTIAL IN FLEA-MARKET FINDS.** Sasha bought the orange chairs on a whim. The fabric was worn, the color was bold, but her intuition was right on. Once re-covered (in an even brighter orange), they became the focal point of the living room.

■ **BUILD A PALETTE AROUND YOUR FAVORITE FABRIC SWATCH, PAINTING, OR VINTAGE POSTCARD.** In this case it was crewelwork fabric with orange, blue, red, and green swirls that Sasha used to cover a small ottoman. It brought all of the colors in the room together.

■ **FRAME YOUR CHILDREN’S ARTWORK.** Sasha’s neighbors don’t have a collection of fine art. Instead they framed their children’s artwork and placed it around the house along with paintings by talented friends.

■ **PAINT WALLS WHITE.** In this cottage, fabrics and accessories—rugs, books, and bright cushions—provide the color. The white walls present an ideal backdrop.