



**Jean Greeson Richard Fast**

HE SAID, SHE SAID

## Fresh looks for tired rooms

**H**ow do you make a traditional room more contemporary? — **Millicent, Hendersonville**

**Jean:** Hi, Millicent. Trying to discover some of our secrets, eh? Well, your question poses the dilemma all interior professionals face, and there are as many answers as there are designers. We like to think of our ideas as experienced judgments rather than secret formulas, and every room in every home is different. But our goal is always to combine four elements: function, comfort, beauty and budget.

**Richard:** Millicent, while Jean is talking about secrets and dilemmas, here's how I would approach your question. Begin by disregarding what you think is "correct" or "appropriate." You are best served by creating an interior that feels right for your needs and sense of style. Choose pieces — traditional or contemporary — that you respond to emotionally. And don't be afraid to mix them. Contemporary pieces usually have straight and cleaner lines with rooms being sparser or minimally furnished.

**Jean:** See what I mean about dilemmas? Mine is what to do with Richard! But he's right about mixing elements that you like. A finished room should appear as if it was developed over time. I'm not talking "hodgepodge," but rather a nice piece from here, another from there — elements that work together to form a collective whole. An assortment that balances old and new works better than a contrived subject theme or strict color palette. Try adding large-scale accessories, simplify your picture frames or change your lampshades to a drum or cylinder shape.

**Richard:** And just as you might combine furnishings and accessories from the past and present, don't be afraid to mix textures and materials. A variety of woods, metals and fabrics (geometrics for example) can enhance the sense that the room is a contemporary reflection of your personal style. With that in mind, buy the best quality you can afford and add to it as you can.

**Jean:** Good quality, yes, but not at the expense of being too conservative. Quality can include fun and whimsical furnishings. Remember, one of the goals of any interior environment is to be comfortable and, as Richard says, how you respond emotionally. Good design is timeless, and it includes many different styles.

**Richard:** Millicent, if your desire is to make your room less boring, try putting a large scale contemporary painting over a Victorian sofa, or a gilt mirror over a primitive chest. I would avoid making the room look like it's from any one period or, as Jean cautions, embracing any one theme. A mixture of clean, contemporary accessories and traditional or antique furnishings can bring a fresh look to a dull, predictable room. And speaking of antiques, I think Jean's birthday is coming up!

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These are the opinions of nationally recognized interior design team Jean Greeson and Richard Fast, who offer advice and services from their studio in Asheville's River Arts District at 352 Depot St. Greeson & Fast Design can be reached at 252-0400 or [www.GreesonAndFast.com](http://www.GreesonAndFast.com).