



# Liberate!

THERE'S NOTHING A FRESH  
COAT OF WHITE PAINT CAN'T DO





1. The Creole cottage is in the French Quarter's residential neighborhood. 2. The owners bring home beignets and chicory coffee from the Café du Monde, just blocks away. 3. Light floods Ann Leggett's elegant bathroom. Alissa LV sink from MTI; Cade double sconces from Restoration Hardware; Platner side table by Knoll. 4. So simple, so beautiful: for the mantel, fronds clipped in the courtyard were casually placed in a grouping of sculptural vases by Jonathan Adler. 5. A separate structure houses the guest quarters and Ann's art studio. 6. Her tub, the Elise 2 by MTI, has a pure, organic beauty. The papier-mâché sculpture by Christina Chalmers reflects her love of shoes. 7. The Leggetts are rebuilding their modern art collection, which includes this painting by Andrée Carter. OPPOSITE: Warm, coppery orange, Ann's favorite color, prevails in the master bedroom. Raso quilted cotton coverlet from Bellino Fine Linens; table lamp from Sunbelt Lighting.











Ceilings this high—13 feet—call for overscale lights. Fambuena's Dress pendant—satin ribbon wrapped over a metal frame—has a feminine glamour and seems to float above the room. Jones chose the Ellington wing chairs by Dessin Fournir for their high backs. The wavy old window glass adds grace and romance. Painting by Margaret Evangeline.



**MIMI READ:** Most people who make a fresh start do so by choice. But Ann and Charles Leggett were forced to begin all over again—with nothing.

**SUSAN NOBLE JONES:** Literally nothing. Their house in Pass Christian, Mississippi, washed away in Katrina. All that was left was just the slab and a piece of chimney. They didn't even have a spoon.

**What kind of house was it?**

Modern, minimalist—all glass, steel, and stucco. I decorated it for them, and it was filled with lots of modern art and classic midcentury furniture. There were pieces by Mies, Saarinen, Warren Platner, Noguchi. Ann still talks about how perfect that house was, and it was. But she didn't want to replicate it. They're both forward-thinking, and they just wanted to move on.

**Why did they move to New Orleans?**

I think because the city is so alive. It has that happy-go-lucky feeling of 'Live life to the fullest.'

**And why did they choose the French Quarter?**

They're fun-loving, and they love artsy people. It's been very easy for them to make friends with artists and writers. The Quarter is so intimate and friendly. She paints, and he renovates properties to rent, and they like being able to just hop out to the street and walk to restaurants and shops. And he rides his bike all over.

**Were you surprised that these two modernists bought an 1820s Creole cottage?**

What surprised me more was this: How did they possibly have the vision that this particular cottage would ever work? They like a clean, simple look. Light, bright, and white. They're not into wood at all. But it was a dark bachelor's pad, frozen in the 1980s. The kitchen was all dark pine, the trim was dark pine, the fireplace was dark pine. There were shag carpets and brass chandeliers—it was so bad.

**What appealed to them, then?**

The history and the solidness, the fact that it had lasted for almost two centuries. Even though their architect had taken every precaution, their



**ABOVE:** French shutters above the kitchen doorway open to what might have originally been a bedroom or storage loft for vegetables. The hot orange Ligne Roset Tania chair is one of four in the breakfast area. They're sometimes mixed with the natural linen chairs in the dining area for a splash of homeowner Ann Leggett's favorite color. The painting is by Ken Tate, the architect who designed the Leggetts' house that was lost in Hurricane Katrina. **OPPOSITE:** The kitchen's worn brick floors contrast with crisp, modern cabinetry by Nordic Kitchens and Baths.

house in Pass Christian was ultimately too fragile. This house feels steadfast and permanent. It's going to be there for them.

**New Orleans houses often feel weighted down by the past—all those heirlooms. There's something liberating about being free of them. This is a house without baggage—it's light.**

Charles and Ann don't care much for antiques and memorabilia. But I made them buy a few French antiques for warmth. I always use antiques sparingly, and I don't clutter up a place with accessories. I like negative space, some void. Then the pieces become more special.

**New Orleanians are also a chandelier-crazy lot. Those large drum-shade pendant lights are a refreshing change.**

Chandeliers would have been too formal and busy. We wanted to make the space more personable, more about people and conversation. I thought, 'You know what? We need great big lamps to come down into the room, because the ceilings are so high and everything's looking too lofty.' These

soft shades are so glamorous and feminine. They make me think of '30s and '40s movie stars—and also of Ann. She's very stylish, loves shoes and clothes. I made the bathroom as glamorous as I could for her. That soaking tub is exquisite, and I could just see her satin robe thrown over the Lucite chair.

**Now I get the meaning of that white art piece over the tub. Shoe passion!**

That's a papier-mâché sculpture. I saw it in a Santa Fe gallery and thought, 'It's so her!'

**Do white walls have anything to do with the house's buoyant, happy feeling?**

Sure they do. White reflects light, so it sends off a wonderful energy, a prism of color that you aren't necessarily aware of.

**Why only orange accents?**

Bitter orange is really the only color Ann likes. Her hair is a coppery cinnamon color—and she loves that hair! Orange is warm and bright, and those attributes, to me, equal happiness.

**What else makes for happy design?**

Rounded shapes like the drum shades, the living room tables, and the tub. They soften a room and make a house more lovable and livable.

**What space in your life has made you happiest?**

Probably my grandmother's home—an old farmhouse that had warm pine floors, a screen door that squeaked. It had airy high ceilings, a big foyer with the doors always open, and a huge hallway—one of those shotgun hallways where you saw through from the back to the front porch. She was warm and angelic. She would build tents for us in the formal living room so we could play. Drape it in white sheets. There were all these fine pieces of furniture, but if we came to play she'd have a big tent made. She'd get on her knees and crawl inside, and we'd play Go Fish and Crazy Eights.

**Has this fresh start led to happiness for the Leggetts?**

As Ann said, 'We found ourselves again. This is who we really are. Happiness is finally arriving in the place we need to be.'

PRODUCED BY OLGA NAIMAN













Brick courtyards are a French Quarter classic—walled gardens lush with the jungle spirit of the tropics. The Leggetts often have parties in theirs, or poolside drinks in the lounge chairs. All the furniture is by Brown Jordan. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES



Clean, modern furnishings and white walls lifted a dark 1820s New Orleans cottage to light and cheery. OPPOSITE: Designer Susan Noble Jones created a dining area in the room next to a second fireplace. Ligne Roset Tania chairs ring a table made of reclaimed cherrywood. Walls are Frostine by Benjamin Moore.

