ENTINE CHECKLIST: RED HOT DRESSES, **37** JEWELRY GIFTS AND DINNERS THAT START WITH DESSERT

KC

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february

74 FASHION: LADY IN RED
From a date with your Valentine to one of the many heart-health galas and events this month, u'll be red-y with our dazzling collection of dresses and accessories filled with heart and soul.
RY BY *KC MAGAZINE* STAFF | PHOTOS BY AUSTIN WALSH

84 DEARLY BELOVED
From Hindu and Christian ceremonies to an eco-friendly exchange of vows, Kansas City uples are incorporating their unique life experiences into truly one-of-a-kind weddings.
RY BY BETSY LEE

90 WANNABE COWBOYS
Inspired by their Kansas farm, homeowners Mike and Kerry Helmuth enlisted the help of interior signer Jill Tran to transform their home into one accommodating both cowboy boots and cocktail dresses.
RY BY TIESHA MILLER | PHOTOS BY BOB GREENSPAN

THE COVER: Floral print corset and skirt by Jovani ($579) from Sassy Chic Boutique (913-248-7800) and turquoise crystal rings ($430) by Erickson Beamon from Churchill (816-561-5240).
OTOGRAPHY BY AUSTIN WALSH | WARDROBE STYLING BY LUIS TAVERAS | HAIR & MAKEUP BY MARINA PROCTOR

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ETIQUETTE

home

HOMEOWNERS **MIKE AND KERRY HELMUTH**
INTERIOR DESIGNER **JILL TRAN**
REMODLING CONTRACTOR **OWENS REMODELING**
STORY BY **TIESHA MILLER**
PHOTOS BY **BOB GREENSPAN**

wannabe cowboys

When homeowners Mike and Kerry Helmuth approached interior designer Jill Tran, she simultaneously met a bit of a design challenge. The couple wanted a touch of rustic and cowboy roped in with elegance and originality. "People usually come to me when they want something different," Tran says. "I was very excited. I wanted them to be able to entertain guests in cowboy boots or cocktail dresses."

When the Helmuths purchased the older Sagamore Hills home three years ago, they began by putting significant thought into the architectural details. With Mike Owens of Owens Remodeling at the helm, they opened up the home's layout by tearing down walls, raising ceilings and adding larger windows.

Kerry Helmuth finally enlisted professional interior design help in early 2010. "I kept thinking I could do it myself, and it was always kind of garbled," she says. "I knew what I liked. I just didn't know how to accomplish what was in my head."

Tran helped encourage the Helmuths to take design risks, and she helped accentuate those architectural details they'd thought so much about. Equally important, she combined the Helmuths' tastes. Heavily inspired by their farm in Kansas, where Mike Helmuth likes to ride horses and tractors and where they often spend their down time, the Helmuths have been known to half jokingly call themselves wannabe cowboys.

They were clients every designer dreams about: homeowners who wanted a distinct look that provided a clear snapshot of their interests and hobbies. "I didn't want the mainstream," Kerry explains. "So many homes are pretty but not thoughtful. I wanted something that was unique, made a little more of a statement and reflected both of us."

The den (left) was one of the most important rooms to Kerry. She wanted a place for the family to gather in the evenings that was both cozy and elegant. Tran found the oversized painting of the dog by Roland Renaud at market in North Carolina. "I love the dramatic scale," Tran says. "He is such a combination of old, wise farm dog and a high-society refined guy."

Tran introduced the couple to artist Mary Ann Johnson, who went with the Helmuths to their farm and incorporated additional images to create the custom painting of a cow (with their farm in the background) that now sits atop the mantel in the living room (left). One of the many items that Tran brought in to complement the scale of the space was a fichus tree that nearly reaches the ceiling. "That was one of the coolest things about working with Jill," Kerry says. "I wanted things to be unique and different, and I didn't have the design confidence. She helped push it. [The tree] was one of those things that I never would have thought of on my own."

Tran explains that to support the unusual mix of elements, the living room drape fabric is rough, raw jute on smooth, polished silk. The dining room (below) was originally in the space where the den is now. Partially because of tall windows that put the family on display to anyone approaching the front door, the rooms were switched to allow for a cozier, more private setting for the den. Here and throughout the home, rustic farmhouse details provide a sophisticated swagger that is both warm and welcoming.

The screened-in porch (right) is next to the kitchen (left). A large window between the two opens completely to join and expand the rooms. The master bedroom (previous spread, left) and master bathroom (previous spread, bottom right) had many elements such as paint color and tile already selected by Kerry. Tran came in with smaller finishes and details to round it out. The bull painting (previous spread, top right) was one that Tran and the Helmuths fell equally in love with. "The back hallway was an unusual little hallway, and I wanted to highlight that," Tran explains. "There's a lot of cowboy and cowgirl in there, too, and I thought [the painting] was really sweet: kind of cute, kind of tough."

And while Kerry sings Tran's praises for pushing her to take design risks, Tran mirrors the sentiment in her pride for the finished product. "One of the things that was wonderful about them was they were willing to take a chance and willing to do something different and out of the norm," Tran says. "It was about mixing what they both wanted, so everyone was thrilled. It was fun to have that challenge and to make them so happy. It's really satisfying because at the end of the day, really, that's what it's all about." ■