Q: What was your biggest design challenge this year?

Now is the ideal time to reflect and reminisce, especially on those hard-to-achieve accomplishments. Here, we asked 14 designers to share their most difficult projects from the past 365 days—and how they solved for them.

Welcome to the Next Issue, our column and social talk series celebrating *House Beautiful*'s 130th anniversary year and the ever-evolving conversations that define modern design. This issue, we asked designers to reflect on this past year and share the challenging projects they're most proud of.

—Joanna Saltz, Editorial Director @JOSALTZ @HOUSEBEAUTIFUL

"The entry of this home opened into the living room, so I had to think of a clever way to create a vestibule. We went with a rounded glass corner so it doesn't cut off the room. It welcomes you in!" **—Crystal Sinclair** @crystalsinclairdesigns





"Finding the focus of this living room, surrounded on both sides by the outdoors, was challenging. To visually interrupt your journey, I chose a trellised cove ceiling that bridges being in two outdoor spaces and positioned the sofas in order to appreciate both the water and the lanai views."

—Alex Alonso @mralextate

"A Santa Monica home's large, open kitchen and dining area created a cold, cavernous white box. We introduced floating wood soffits to add intimacy and varied textures to soften and lighten the space."

—Marcos Santa Ana
@alloi_us

FROM TOP: ADRIAN GAUT; GABRIEL VOLPI.



"One of our biggest recent design challenges was a small guest room in Idaho that needed to feel special while accommodating visiting grandchildren. We maximized every inch with custom millwork and built-in bunk beds with bespoke bedding."

—Jasmin Reese @jasminreeseinteriors

"I transformed this 400-square-foot kitchen from a dark, outdated space into a bright, highly organized hub for a family of five. My focus was on eliminating visual clutter without sacrificing functionality, using custom cabinetry and better positioning of appliances."

—Arianne Bellizaire
@ariannebellizaire
interiors





"When I opened my coffee shop, The Cobbler, the original bar design changed quite a bit to adjust for the equipment, plumbing, and health-code requirements. I had to learn how much space an espresso machine needs, where the hand sink has to go, how water filtration works, and how many steps a barista takes to make one drink."

—Max Humphrey
@maxwhumphrey



"One of the trickiest spaces we tackled in 2026 was a long, narrow living room. We tucked a table and chairs into the octagonal end of the room and two small coffee tables into the main seating area, which helped us make use of the whole room without overcrowding it."

—Louise Copeland
@lbcopelandinteriors

"I had to design and install an entire house in just five weeks. I used more retail than usual, then layered with Facebook Marketplace and eBay finds and pieces from every thrift store I passed."

—Adnan Anwar @adnananwardesign

"We were tasked with turning a galley kitchen and formal living room into a multifunctional space, so we installed a banquette with a dining table on one side and a chaise meant for lounging on the other."

—Ariel Fischer @noablakedesign

SPREAD, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MICHAEL ALAN KASKEL; VENJHAMIN REYES; RACHEL ALYSE MANNING; MICHAEL P.H. CLIFFORD/TRUNK ARCHIVE; RACHEL ALYSE MANNING; ETHAN HERRINGTON; KAITLIN GREEN; ADAM KANE MACCHIA.

"Our most recent showcase space was a grand living room with heavily textured walls, where removal wasn't an option. Instead, we applied an intricate lattice treatment over them to disguise what was underneath."

—Amy Peltier
@peltier_interiors



"We helped a longtime client downsize from a family home filled with antiques into a high-rise condo by carefully editing her furniture and art collection, then layering in new pieces to fill the gaps."

—Nicole Zarr
@nicolezarrdesign

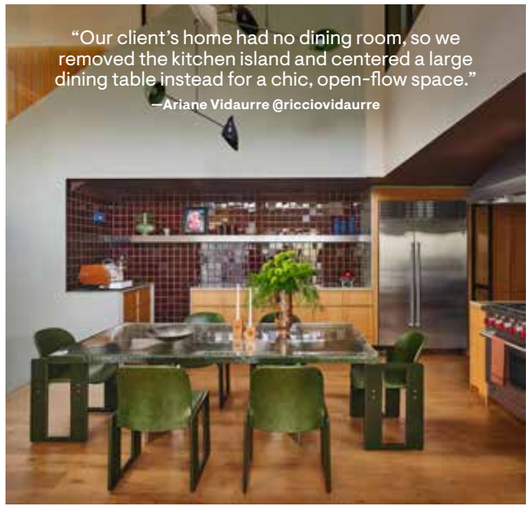
"We wanted to incorporate a rich palette throughout a historic home while maintaining a cohesive flow. We approached it with a neutral anchor of warm cream, then repeated key shades, like yellow, across different spaces."

—Lauren Stern @laurensterndesign



"Our client's home had no dining room, so we removed the kitchen island and centered a large dining table instead for a chic, open-flow space."

—Ariane Vidaurre @ricciovidaurre





"One of the most rewarding opportunities this year was transforming an overlooked attic into a dream dressing room. We worked with the architect to build it out with a large island, vanity, laundry, and steam unit."

—Lindsey Herod
@lindseyherodinteriors