

GRAY MATTERS

Smart design abounds in a chic, family-friendly home in Glenview

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Wallcovering from Schumacher in the foyer and a glimpse of the palette in the keeping room introduce the home's pervading color scheme.

A deeper connection to family and a better quality of life led Louisville native Katie Ryser, her husband Fred and their two young children to recently relocate from New York City to her hometown. The transition process and job search they anticipated would take two years happened in just a few months, forcing them to move at breakneck speed to find and establish a new home. Lucky for Katie, good taste runs in the family, so she called on her cousin Libby Rush, vice president at Bittners to house hunt with her. Her top choice was a diamond in the rough, in need of some contemporizing but ideally suited for the relaxed family life Katie envisioned.

Trading in 2,000 square feet on the Upper East Side of New York for more than 6,000 square feet on five acres in

Glenview hardly seems like a chore until you consider the scale of the renovation and the three-month window to get everything accomplished. Always one to see the silver lining, Katie was not worried. "I saw the great work Libby did on my mother's place in Florida, taking it down to the studs to a beautiful finished product in six months, and knew it wouldn't be an issue," she said.

Katie loves to recall the reaction of her friends in New York City when she told them of her plans to move to Kentucky. "There is such a misperception about Louisville," she said, recalling that they were shocked she was able to find high-end accoutrements for the renovation locally. "The first time I walked into the Bittners showroom and saw the level of design there I never thought twice about it. This town is world-class."



The family's dog Hazel is welcome to recline on the oversized sectional, upholstered in durable indoor/outdoor fabric. Also kid-friendly is the room's vinyl wallcovering.



A Fornasetti-print wallpaper from Cole & Son enlivens the wetbar adjacent to the family room.

While some people prefer to see things in black and white, Katie favors the gray areas, as evidenced by their freshly renovated family-friendly home outfitted in varying shades of the hue. “There’s a crispness to it that makes other colors seem to pop,” she explained. Passionate about design, Katie called on inspiration garnered from daily walks in her New York City neighborhood where she’d push her children in a stroller through the showrooms in the Decoration and Design Building to give Libby direction for the project.

Working with contractor Doug Amlung, there was nary a surface in the home that wasn’t touched. Katie was very hands-on throughout, using a combination of her acquired New York City gruffness with just enough Southern charm to keep the subcontractors on task and on time. In short order, the home went from a time capsule of traditional 1990s-era design to a chic environment that is 100 percent kid- and pet-friendly. “I want everything to look good but able to be beat on, dirtied and then cleaned up easily,” said Katie.

The heart of the home is the kitchen, which is open to the family and breakfast rooms. Completely renovated, the kitchen boasts a lively backsplash from Ann Sacks, Bosch appliances and new hardwood floors. Interesting and varied art found in every room reflects the family’s youthful exuberance.

In the family room, the vaulted ceiling was stained, and rough-hewn beams from Longwood Antique Woods add visual interest. An oversized sectional is perfect for piling on and shakes off stains and spills courtesy of velvety soft indoor/outdoor upholstery. The ottoman was custom-sized to match the scale of the sectional and is a favorite springboard for when the children engage in a game that requires them to cross the room without touching the floor. Also kid-friendly is the vinyl wallcovering that replicates the look of grasscloth but is easy to clean. With the exception of weighing in as to where the television should be placed in the room, Katie joked that Fred “stayed out of my wheelhouse” and left the entirety of the project in her hands. A lively Fornasetti wallcovering for Cole & Son dresses up a nearby wet bar nook.



Interior designer Libby Rush of Bittners worked with Katie Reece of Century Entertainment and Furnishings to design the kitchen cabinetry. The tile backsplash is Ann Sacks.

The master bedroom is designed as a restful retreat.



Fit for a princess, the daughter's room sports "Melville," wallpaper from Cole & Son.



In the keeping room, box beams of the coffered ceiling, brick fireplace surround, bookcases and trim are painted in the same gray hue in varying degrees of luster. For contrast, the ceiling is painted a refreshing shade of light blue.



French doors in the keeping room are centered with the pool and pool house. The box beams of the coffered ceiling, brick fireplace surround, bookcases and trim are painted in the same gray color with varying degrees of shininess. For contrast, the ceiling is painted a refreshing shade of light blue. A Stark carpet in an antelope print anchors the seating area that includes a Chesterfield-style sofa with gray upholstery. In this room, like the others, there is a discernible feeling of restraint that gives weight to the art and objects that remain. "Living in a smaller place with two young children taught me how to edit and organize," explained Katie.

Proof positive that good taste is timeless, a set of drapery panels that graced the windows in Katie's grandparent's house on Avish Lane and procured by the couple's realtor Joanne Owen of Kentucky Select Properties when she sold the

residence several years ago served as the jumping off point for the design of the formal living room. A playful departure from the prevailing color palette found elsewhere, the room has a palpable chinoiserie vibe expressed most notably through a wall-mounted screen sourced from 1stdibs. A vibrant teal blue grasscloth from Schumacher is paired with varying shades of coral and gold accents to lend an air of femininity.

A patterned runner in shades of gray and blue selected for the stairs leading to the second floor children's bedrooms and reading nook are reflective of the overall design ethos: beautiful, durable and able to hide a multitude of sins. Fittingly feminine, the daughter's bedroom is pretty in pink with "Melville," a whale print wallpaper from Cole & Son in the bedroom and their classic "Woods" sketched tree wallpaper in the en suite bathroom.



Drapery panels that belonged to the wife's grandparents served as the impetus for the design of the formal living room. The walls are dressed in a Schumacher grasscloth. The coffee table was purchased from 1stDibs.

The design of the breakfast room reflects the home's overall ethos of family-friendly chic.



Not one to sit still for long, once phase one of the house project was move-in ready, Katie turned off her design brain and activated her business side, acquiring the rights to open a trio of Cycle Bar studios in Louisville in the next 18 months (the first is scheduled to open in the Shelbyville Road Plaza near Trader Joe's in November). "I'm excited to raise the bar on fitness in Louisville," she said, adding that the local exercise community has been fully supportive of her endeavor, something she couldn't imagine happening in New York.

Now several months into Louisville life and with the opening of Katie's new business on the horizon, the Reyser family could not be more pleased with their decision to move. "When I turn onto the street from River Road, a feeling of calm comes over me," said Katie. "With the sun streaming through the trees and the creek, the barn and horses, I think it's the essence of Kentucky. We really didn't know life could be so relaxing until we moved here." 