

Grand Crew

A team of designers from Bittners imbues a historic Glenview estate with a feeling of casual California cool.

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Transplants to the Louisville area from California in search of a home that was gracious enough for entertaining but still casual enough to call to mind the lifestyle they left behind found a suitable candidate in an E.T. Hutchings-designed estate on 4.6-ares in Glenview. “After walking in the front door and seeing the view through the living room to the outside I was sold,” said the wife, who added that coming from a mid-century modern home she appreciated the historic residence’s “privacy, subtlety, grand rooms and balanced architecture”.



The Jeffersonian-style home, designed by E.T. Hutchings, is positioned on 4.6-acres in Glenview.



Ports for charging various electronic devices are embedded into the perimeter of a rustic table custom-made by the artisans at Bittners.

Searching for an interior designer who could implement a “lifestyle approach”, the homeowners interviewed several potential candidates before selecting Joe Wood of Bittners, who took the time to discern how the family would utilize the gracious spaces within the Jeffersonian-style home. “We spent three hours talking about how they live as a family...kids, dogs, and not being too formal,” explained Wood.

While Wood was starting largely from scratch, a scenario that could prove to be a boon or bust depending on the designer, he wasn’t without ample assistance from both the wife, who he remarked “has a great point of view and understands design,” as well as Chad Cobb, his colleague at Bittners. The

bones of the home—custom herringbone oak flooring, ornate antique marble mantels and twelve-foot ceilings—were also enviable assets at his disposal.

According to Wood, the process of determining the starting point when working from scratch can often prove to be a conundrum. “Since they had little in the way of existing pieces, we had to be careful to make the home feel ‘collected’ and to not resemble a showroom. It was important to make sure it felt personal,” he explained.

A paneled library to the right of the entrance hall served as the collaborator’s foray. Existing soot damage necessitated a redo of all of the trim work. Formerly pickled wood, the wife was admittedly at odds with Wood over his proposal to paint

the space in a flat grey hue; it was one of several instances where the client trusted the professional, with an outcome that was much to everyone’s satisfaction. Anchoring the center of the library is a substantial table, custom-made by the wood artisans at Bittners, whose rustic form belies its contemporary connectivity capabilities. Cleverly hidden around the table’s perimeter are various ports for charging computers, tablets and other electronic devices. Uses for the handsome space extend beyond office and homework. “We are a large family and often have overflow for the Holidays, so we wanted an indestructible piece with designated charging areas,” said the wife. It was the wife who suggested papering the ceiling in grasscloth;

the silk background adds subtle iridescence to counter the more masculine elements. Other feminine attributes include dressmaker skirted chairs and ikat Roman window shades.

Wood worked backward from the picture window in what the architect dubbed “the living hall”, choosing a “long, sexy and leggy” daybed to position in the center of the expanse of glass that overlooks a balustraded terrace, pool and lawn. Propped against the wall opposite the fireplace are a pair of large carved church doors from a monastery in Mexico that the wife found in Indiana and represent one of the few existing pieces Wood had to work with. “A lot of design decisions were made around those doors,” he explained.



Initially reluctant to cover the dining room's existing hand-painted mural with a silk grasscloth wallpaper, the wife had a change of heart once the install was complete. "I'm so in love with it I can't stand it. It's my favorite room," she said.



Wood described his process for decorating the living room as “all about layering texture.”



Propped against the wall opposite the fireplace in the living room are a pair of large carved church doors from a monastery in Mexico that the wife found in Indiana.



Subtle yet sumptuous patterns and textures come into play throughout the home, as this vignette from the living room demonstrates.

Radiant heating in all of the floors made wiring for overhead lighting quite a challenge, but not as big as the one Wood and Cobb faced when trying to sell the homeowners on a rock crystal chandelier they proposed for the living room. Covertly installing it while the homeowners were away, the wife was convinced once she saw the piece in situ. Speaking to the room’s other design elements, Wood explained that it was “all about layering texture,” signaling out the “soft hand” of courduroy, silk and velvet. The wife remarked that when they are causally entertaining they often dine in the living room. “It keeps it intimate and relaxing. I would rather be here than in a restaurant.”

The walls of the dining room presented another point of contention between the clients and the designers. Covered with a hand-painted mural the wife described as “kitschy and interesting”,

Wood argued that it was out of step with the design scheme that had evolved in the adjacent rooms and proposed refreshing the walls with a textured silk grasscloth wallcovering. “I was tortured by the idea of covering [the mural] up and was in tears the day it happened,” explained the wife. However, as soon as the installation was complete she had a change of heart and quickly warmed to the revamped environs. “I’m so in love with it I can’t stand it. It’s my favorite room.”

Design decisions can be tricky and the wife was happy to rely on Wood throughout the project, explaining, “Joe was great at deciding where the budget should go and where to cut. It’s so much easier when you can let someone make the tough decisions.” Calling to mind the Bittners’ tagline, Wood added that, “this project was really about reviving a great house designed around the way this family lives.” ⁴