



MODERN TWIST

on a FRENCH PROVINCIAL

Photography by Robert Burge
Written by Steve Kaufman

A nod to the French countryside designed by Bittners

The stately French Provincial-style stucco home sits back off the road, behind a large gravel courtyard, surrounded by several acres of leafy woodland with trees and horse trails – yet another example of historic Anchorage architecture from the early 20th century.

Except this house was built in 2008.

“They were looking for new construction with an old world feel,” Christopher Prather, designer at Bittners, says of homeowners’ Anna and Mike Boone. “And inside, they wanted an Italian classic feel, but not too opulent or fussy. Formal, but inviting. A functional house that could be comfortable to their children and grandchildren, yet still have a sense of style.”

“The process took several years,” says Prather. The intent was that each room be somewhat different, not a trendy series of matching set pieces, but with a consistency so that every room flowed.

And, says project Architect Frank Pierce, Anna Boone “wanted drama.”

That drama starts right at the beginning, a foyer just inside the three front doors, a central entryway that Pierce refers to as “the gallery.”

Because of the symmetrical architecture of the H-shaped house, the gallery is actually a long, wide hallway between the two wings. The length of the gallery gave Prather several opportunities to make distinct statements with elegant chandeliers and marble floors. “We tried to keep it classic with a neutral color and pattern, but with a dark brown marble border in the flooring.”

Almost everything is symmetry, including a pair of antique Italian consoles on either side of

the entrance into the living room, with identical Venetian-style mirrors, a pair of side chairs and antique urns beneath the console.

“Using antique pieces as accessories adds to the older feel of the home, but we took our time and tried to be very specific to get the right pieces,” says Prather. For example, the designer says, “the console tables sat for two years without anything around them because we just couldn’t find what we wanted. Then Bittners got a couple of marble urns in, and both Mrs. Boone and I said, ‘That’s just what we’ve been looking for!’ ”

According to Prather, Bittners’ President and COO Douglas Riddle regularly shops the antique markets in Chicago, New York and Atlanta for new finds, and Prather was on the lookout with every delivery. “The advantage of being both the manager of the showroom and deliveries at Bittners is that I can get my hands on everything that comes into The Design Studio,” he says. “As we developed the style we wanted for the house, I was able to show the client many interesting pieces and accessories.”

Another “just the right find” in the gallery is a plaster Greco-Roman bust on a black table with a marble base. It looks like the perfect purchase from a European antique gallery. He had Bittners’ master craftsmen make a wooden table for it and now, Prather says, it’s the focal point at the front of the house, a piece of understated elegance that everyone loves.

Tying the gallery together is a commissioned mural by Louisville artist Sandy Kimura, a pastoral Anchorage scene of woodsy animals, trees, creeks and stone fences that wraps all the way around the space. “The foyer sets a tone of elegance but not







pretentiousness, with a soothing and subtle palette that doesn't overwhelm," Prather says.

Directly from the center of the gallery is a view through a two-story great room to a set of French doors and into the woods beyond. The room is furnished with the plush, stylish but comfortable seating that Bittners is known for designing and manufacturing — in this case cut-velvet upholstery with a raffia fabric on the side and antique nail heads.

Patterned pillows and seats blend in with the cream and beige of the upholstery and antique rug. Prather mirrored an alcove wall at one end of the room to provide a counter focal point against a stone fireplace with an Italian old-world feel at the other end of the room. A wooden chandelier with a gilded finish accentuates the room with the beauty of aged gold.

The home's palette of mostly creams, whites and beige is not only elegant and understated, but allows the Boones a comfortable, casual lifestyle, especially when their many grandchildren come over. The rooms are large, the grounds sprawl and the abundant acreage permits plenty of spreading out and also plenty of exterior views. For that reason, French doors and tall windows, many without window treatments, let the outside pour in.

The architectural symmetry is not only from side to side but also from front to back so every window and door in the front is mimicked on the back wall by windows and doors. A lower-level walk-out in the back, where the ground slopes down, leads to terraces, patios and gardens. Light circulates through the space as do air currents, keeping the interior cool.

However, as a practical matter, the house is insulated just as it might have been done if it were really built 100 years ago. The front wall of the house is 12 inches thick, says Pierce, and clad with real stucco, not a product emulating stucco.

Not every room features the neutral palette of softly painted walls. At one end of the entry hallway

is a soothing study, with dark wood wall paneling and moldings, leather and earth tone furniture and built-in bookcases filled with antique books. "It's meant as a retreat for after-dinner drinks," says Prather, "but Mrs. Boone has found this to be her favorite room to go into and read, just a warm and cozy solitude."

Even here, though, Prather didn't abandon the elements of color throughout the rest of the house. A green band ingeniously inserted between the paneling and the molding, and curtains with a leafy/floral pattern, reflect the mural in the adjoining hallway.

There's another change of pace in the hearth room adjoining the open kitchen, an open space with vaulted ceiling lines and beams and a more contemporary piece of art, also by Sandy Kimura, hanging over a contemporary fireplace.

"This room is for when the family comes over," Prather explains. "The open space that leads directly from the kitchen is how people gather in today's lifestyle. The kitchen used to be in the back of the house and closed off. Now it's where people want to congregate."

Another gathering space is the family room on the lower level. The room is a little more informal and casual featuring a beautiful cowhide rug on the floor. The creamy upholstered seating, polished wood floors and arched mirrors with window-like panes keep the room classical and elegant.

And nice surprise is a guest bedroom in the back of the lower-level area featuring four built-in bunk beds, complete with shelves and reading lights, oversized pillows and stuffed animals. On the opposite wall is a matching entertainment cabinet with a TV and gaming system, clearly intended for the younger grandchildren.

From family gatherings to formal entertaining, this home took a modern twist on a traditional French Provincial with the expertise of a legendary design firm, Bittners. 













