



Room to Roost

An Anchorage couple builds a gracious home with generously proportioned rooms to ensure there's a place at the table for everyone in their large family

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Photography by Andrew Kung



If you've spent any time in Bittners' Main Street showroom, then you've undoubtedly had the pleasure of meeting Christopher Prather, the company's affable visual merchandising manager who helps guide customers through the cornucopia of delightful furnishings and accessories arrayed there. It was one fortuitous customer interaction, involving deliberation over a pair of accent chairs, which drew Prather out of the showroom and into his first residential commission for Bittners. The homeowners, a couple with 18 grandchildren, decided to buck the trend of downsizing after the last bird has left the nest, and instead built a home in Anchorage that is ample enough to accommodate the entirety of

their large family. Feeling an instant alignment with Prather's design sensibilities and easygoing nature, the wife implored his assistance in outfitting their new home, a request he enthusiastically obliged.

Describing the project as a marathon rather than a sprint, Prather proceeded carefully and deliberately with the homeowners, who patiently resided in a completed second floor guest suite while the remainder of the rooms, including the kitchen, were being finished. During this period the couple relied on the culinary charity of their daughter, who lives nearby. "We joked that she needed to add a drive-through window in her kitchen for us," said the wife.

Prather commissioned artist Sandy Kimura to create a pair of paintings displayed in the hearth room.



The general design scheme of the home, designed by architect Frank Pierce, began with the idea of a singular room large enough to allow the entire family to dine together. This desire, combined with the homeowners' fondness for light-filled spaces with ample doors that permit rooms to be opened to one another for parties, brought about a linear floorplan on three levels with a long corridor spanning the width of the structure that fronts a large centralized gathering room on each. When the plans were being drawn, the husband was particularly focused on ensuring that the home was properly positioned on the lot. A stickler for functionality, he had a secondary garage added for storing gardening equipment. The resulting residence, a study in proportion and balance, presented unique challenges and opportunities from an interior design perspective.

On the main level, the walls are adorned with a hand-painted landscape mural by Sandy Kimura. The wife was introduced to the artist's work through the Bellarmine

Showhouse. After settling on the general color palette, the homeowners encouraged her to drive through Anchorage for inspiration. Sprinkled throughout the bucolic scene are highly personal elements, some of which stretch back to the husband's childhood in Nelson County.

Furnishings throughout the first floor are nearly all newly acquired. "This home has a much grander scale than their previous one, so they needed pieces to match the proportions," explained Prather. Also a departure from their former home is the color palette. "We had a lot more color, but this time I wanted to keep things calm and soothing," said the wife. Prather and the wife enjoyed scouting antiques and accessories from local sources along with a buying trip to the Scott Antique Market in Atlanta. "Christopher was so good about purchasing what was right for each room and not just settling to fill a space," said the wife. Prather underscored this remark by pointing out that it took three years to get the finishing touches just right.

A chandelier by Currey & Co hangs above the seating area in the living room. The fireplace mantel was purchased in Atlanta.



Custom cabinetry in the expansive kitchen was fabricated by Christopher Peacock.



The table in the dining area is one of the few pieces that made the transition from the homeowners' prior residence.



In the combination living/dining room, a set of three oversized French doors open onto a spacious verandah. Positioned on opposing ends of the room are a pair of grandly scaled chandeliers from Currey & Co. The ethereal color scheme of blue and cream is punctuated with a keen eye for detail and subtle touches of shimmer.

Inspired by an image from the wife's extensive collection of clippings from design magazines, the paneled library is Prather's favorite room in the home. Constructed of handsome knotty alder wood with gilt accents that are reflective of lettering found on the spines of the vintage books displayed in the bonnet-top cabinets, the paneling purposefully stops short of the ceiling to highlight the detailed craftsmanship. The homeowners are fond of enjoying morning coffee or after dinner drinks in the cozy environs.

An absence of window treatments in the master bedroom was a deliberate choice to allow the homeowners an unfettered view of the majestic mature trees that dot the landscape. A decorative screen in the master bathroom was crafted by the custom shop at Bittners, who also built a bed for a guest bedroom to match an existing pair of nightstands. The handsome cabinetry in the master bathroom and in the spacious kitchen is from Christopher Peacock.

More than compensating for the months spent without a proper place to cook, the kitchen and hearth room contribute to the overall aura of casual elegance permeating the home. A walnut-topped island breaks up the expanse of white cabinetry, while a 13-foot triple bay window over the sink speaks to the scale of the space. Polished steel accents are found in the apron front farmhouse-style sink and the basketweave tile behind the range.

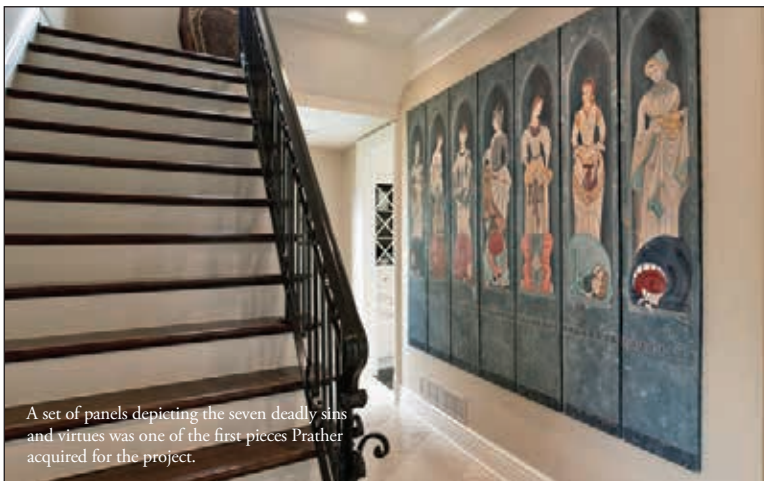


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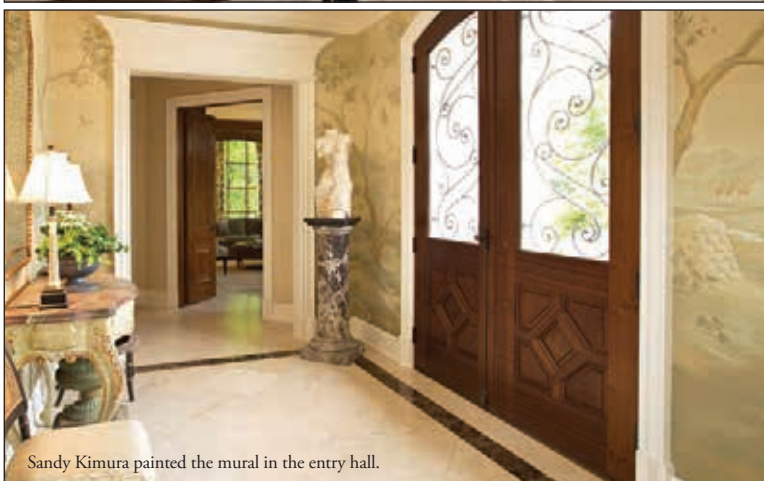
David Childs constructed the built-in bunkbeds in a lower level guest room.



A set of panels depicting the seven deadly sins and virtues was one of the first pieces Prather acquired for the project.



Artist Barbara Koby depicted different branches of the homeowners' family tree on the inside of the elevator shaft door at each level.



Sandy Kimura painted the mural in the entry hall.

A pair of Bittners' made palladium mirrors in the lower level reflect the view of the verdant rear landscape.



In the adjacent hearth room, a tall antique case clock recently refurbished by Bittners was initially purchased to commemorate the birth of the couple's first grandchild. Decorative wood beams accentuating the vaulted ceiling along with linen drapery and houndstooth upholstery with nailhead trim speak to the more casual nature of the room. Prather remarked that the commissioned painting by Kimura above the console calls to mind "out of focus tree branches."

The long corridor layout in the walkout lower level proved to be somewhat of a design challenge, but Prather mitigated the scale by installing a series of tall Bittners-made mirrors on the wall opposite the doors to a covered terrace. Their shape mimics palladium windows and reflects the verdant rear landscape.

One can almost hear the infectious laughter of children just by looking at the built-in bunk beds found in a lower level bedroom. Built by David Childs from a photograph the wife spied in a magazine, each nook boasts shelving and a reading light.

Prather's design choices for the room align with the wife's desire for something that was youthful but also timeless.

Among the home's hidden gems is the elevator, which speaks to the husband's keen interest in genealogy. Artist Barbara Koby dressed up this utilitarian luxury by painting segments of the family tree on the insides of the elevator shaft door at each level, so that as you proceed from the basement, the sturdy trunk of the locust tree, inspired by one on the property, eventually tops out with myriad branches to reflect their burgeoning brood. Making it even more endearing to the homeowners is the presence of their dearly departed dog Daisy frolicking about in the scene.

One of the wife's most treasured aspects of the home is one that is no longer visible. Struggling with the decision to leave their long-term residence in Hurstbourne, a neighbor and dear friend, since deceased, wrote words of encouragement on the 2'x4's when the home was under construction, thereby imbuing the very new spaces with the warmth only an old friend can lend. **sl**