



HIGHLANDS RENAISSANCE

Interior Designer Ron Wolz of Bittners
champions the revitalization of an aging beauty

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Even when they considered the peeling plaster, sagging ceilings and a second floor sleeping porch precipitously perched on a pair of rickety L-brackets, there was something about the original steel French doors in the living and dining rooms that held an irresistible appeal to the owners of a gracious three-story stuccoed home on a leafy boulevard near Cherokee Park. “Those doors sold me on the house,” said the husband.

Though an oft-used adage, the home’s “good bones” were indeed an ideal canvas from which architect Dan Fultz, contractor Keith Morley of Don Johnson Contractors and interior designer Ron Wolz of Bittners wrought a transformation that is mindful of historic integrity while fulfilling the needs of a vivacious young family.

As part of the renovation, porches were reconfigured, the driveway relocated, the floor plan opened up to enable a

circular flow from one side of the home to the other and an addition allowed for the expansion of the kitchen, a new family room, garage and office/lounge for the husband. What they did not alter were the steel doors; when combined with the dark wood floors and walls with just a hint of color to set off the white trim, they evoke an atmosphere simultaneously timeless and cosmopolitan.

In the couple’s previous home, the wife expressed her penchant for 1940s-era design with lots of antique pieces. For this home, she wanted the interiors to project a more youthful and comfortable ambience, which gave Wolz a virtual clean slate to acquire all new furnishings and accessories, a rare treat for an interior designer. “This is such a special house with an amazing flow, so starting from a blank slate was perfect,” he added.



During initial consultations, Wolz and the wife were literally on the same page; the two often brought the exact same page torn from a magazine to illustrate their preferred interior design direction. “The proportion of the rooms, along with the unique door details and large windows are ideal for light and fresh colors,” said Wolz.

Adding visual heft to the ethereal colors in the dining room is a new stone fireplace mantel. Though the fireplace in both the living and dining rooms were added decades after the home was built, the carefully chosen mantel in each room eradicates any sense they are not original. An abstract artwork by Jackson, Mississippi-based mixed media artist William Goodman that rests on the mantle perfectly encapsulates the interior design aesthetic: largely neutral with just the right

amount of playful pops of color. An ill-conceived L-shaped porch once adjacent to but not able to be accessed through the dining room was removed and replaced with a comfortable sunroom that provides an intimate spot for an aperitif.

Opposite the dining room, the color palette of the living room conjures the varied shades of green that appear in the treetops and on lawns at the onset of spring. “With so much of the park at the doorstep, the large windows really pull in the green, a color [the wife] is really fond of,” explained Wolz. Interior window mullions are painted black (as they are in the dining room as well), to mimic the steel doors. Wolz pointed out that the black actually draws the eye outside rather than white, which typically serves as a visual stopping point.

An abstract landscape painting by John Beard is positioned over the sofa in the living room. The Murano glass chandelier was purchased at auction from the estate of Louisville artist Stephen Irwin. Ikat drapery and upholstery on the club chairs is from Thibaut.



The wife has a particular penchant for sourcing the perfect lighting fixtures and she is particularly pleased with the Murano glass chandelier in the living room, which was purchased from the estate of Louisville artist Stephen Irwin. Wolz chose woven ikat fabric from Thibaut for the drapery and the upholstery on the club chairs. The Greek Key-influenced design of the drapery is repeated on the Stark carpet. An abstract landscape painting by John Beard is positioned over the sofa.

A second set of steel French doors leads to a sitting area that serves as an intimate extension of the living room and was created when the second-floor sleeping porch was converted to living space. An obvious focal point is a pair of handsome steel support columns that were custom fabricated for the project. Here the pervasive

accent color is an oceanic blue-green hue expressed primarily through a round leather upholstered ottoman that is surrounded by four upholstered club chairs with nailhead detail and ikat accent pillows. The wife's future plans for the space include adorning the walls with artwork acquired during their travels.

The expanded kitchen and living room function as one, and it is here where you are likely to find one or more family members spending some downtime. The Falk Manor House velvet upholstery in coral on ivory from Scalamandré on the ottoman in the family room served as inspiration for the other accent colors. A support column placed near a contemporary-style built-in wet bar with mirrored toe kick and marble legs matches the pair in the sitting room.



The Falk Manor House velvet upholstery in coral on ivory from Scalamantré on the ottoman in the family room served as inspiration for the room's other accent colors.





A large Carrara marble-topped rectangular island with a round dining table integrated at one end bisects the kitchen.



A space that was once an ill-conceived L-shaped porch adjacent to but not able to be accessed through the dining room is now a comfortable sunroom.







The foyer was enlarged during the renovation. Dark wood flooring and walls with just a hint of color to set off the white trim evoke an atmosphere simultaneously timeless and cosmopolitan.



Wolz refers to the kitchen as “thoroughly modern with classic elements.” A large Cararra marble-topped rectangular island with a round dining table integrated at one end bisects the space. Stained wood built-ins with mirrored doors contrast the white cabinetry and hearken to the era of the home’s construction.

Culled from the formerly scrubby rear yard and finished just before Derby, a series of stone terraces steps down to a swimming pool and pool house with an epicurean outdoor kitchen. An existing arbor at the rear of the property was refurbished, as was the original gate, the latter of which required stripping off layer after layer of paint. Stonemason Wayne Grubbs is credited with the meticulous handiwork involved in building the massive stone fireplace that anchors a seating area near the outdoor kitchen.

While the wife set the direction for the interior design in the main residence, the man of the house was given free rein to create a personal retreat located in a vaulted room over

the garage. A winding stair leads to a curved door crafted in the Spanish Colonial Revival Style. Inside, an iron chandelier with leather straps is suspended between rustic hand-hewn ceiling beams that are complemented by wide-plank reclaimed hardwood floors. A Murphy bed on one wall, a large bar with mini-kitchen and a full bath with steam shower allow the space to do double duty as a self-contained guest suite as well. Though a favored get-away for the husband, the wife admits to stealing away to the peace and quiet every so often as well.

Though a tremendous undertaking, the couple remains pleased with the end result. “It took a long time but we did everything just how we wanted it,” said the wife. By preserving the home’s integrity and having the design of each room built upon a neutral foundation, Wolz points out that future changes will be much less arduous. “Swapping out accent colors is a breeze,” he added, though it’s unlikely the homeowners will make any alterations to their chic environs anytime soon. 