

“As Of Yet,” a series of vibrant abstract mixed-media works by Letitia Quesenberry, frames the arched doorway to the great room.

THE NEW CLASSIC

For the renovation of a Glenview home, interior designer Ron Wolz of Bittners used a heady combination of contemporary art and antiques to create rooms that tell a compelling story.

Written by Bridget Williams / Photography by Andrew Kung

“As Of Yet,” a series of vibrant, abstract mixed-media works by Letitia Quesenberry installed in the paneled foyer of a Georgian Revival-style home in Glenview, are a reminder to not judge a book by its cover. Throughout this recently renovated home—a project overseen by Ron Wolz of Bittners—there is a harmonious interplay of antique and modern that exemplifies Ron’s vision of what it means to be “timeless.”

No sooner had Ron finished working with the homeowners on the renovation of their previous residence when the husband became smitten with this river bluff property. The wife was less enthusiastic when she first laid eyes on it during an Easter Sunday drive-by. “I immediately said ‘no’ because we had just finished my dream kitchen,” she said. In spite of the dated interiors and overgrown landscape, the wife was eventually won over by the home’s attributes, including a first-floor master suite, a finished basement where their college-aged children and their friends can hang out, and a private backyard with a pool.

A mutual admiration society exists between Ron and the homeowners. “Ron can walk into a room and visualize its potential within five minutes,” said the husband. Ron countered

the kudos by praising the homeowners’ ability to see past the home’s prior shortcomings, and instead focus on the potential inherent in its “good bones.”

Ron worked with Terry R. Hagerman Builders to carry out the renovation and cosmetic improvements. Constructed in the 1980s, the home’s dark paneling and trim were instantly made modern with a fresh coat of white paint. The ambitious project was completed in just four months, and in time for a planned milestone birthday party. The wife recalls that both movers and tile installers were still working the night before the celebration to meet the deadline.

An abundance of natural light and graciously proportioned rooms are ideally suited for displaying art, and pieces in a variety of mediums can be found in every room. The couple made their foray into collecting during a trip to Venice, buying an art glass horse that now rests on the mantel in the great room. The husband said their efforts ramped up during a 2014 trip to Cuba, where an abstract painting they acquired serves as a striking reminder of their visit. “The pieces we buy aren’t always valuable, but they are all meaningful in some way,” he explained.

Dog-friendly upholstery on the sectional in a cozy sitting room adjacent to the kitchen makes it a welcoming space for all the home’s occupants.



Mirrored subway tile used for the great room's corner bar provides a unique backdrop for a collection of Kentucky's native spirit.



Chinoiserie wallpaper from Schumacher is the star of a powder room.



A colorful vignette in the entry.



The design of the the formal living room was orchestrated around a painting by Tony Saladino surmounting the mantel.



The copper range hood and walnut-topped island were custom-crafted for the kitchen.

The double-height entry—anchored by a unique Oushak carpet executed in shades of pink, yellow and blue, along with the aforementioned quilt-like configuration of works by Letitia Quesenberry—is flanked by a formal living and dining room. In the former, a painting by Tony Saladino surmounting the mantel served as the catalyst for the room's design. A collection of classic blue and white porcelain and enduring ikat upholstery are fitting foils for the contemporary art, which also includes a triptych acquired from the Moreman Gallery.

While a classically styled fireplace in the dining room helped to dictate the design, the focal point of the space is a Bittners-made dining table. The one-of-a-kind piece mates a traditional ebony-banded mahogany top with sculptural pedestal legs reminiscent of a Vladimir Kagan design from the 1950s. An inlaid ebony monogram in the center of the tabletop ensures that this artisan-made piece will be treasured for generations.

At the heart of the wife's version 2.0 dream kitchen is a walnut-topped island, custom-made in Tennessee, that is nearly identical to the one in their previous home. While the wife is particularly fond of the made-to-order copper range hood, the husband is quick to cite his affinity for the Control4 Smart Home system, which was installed by Spectrum Sight and Sound. Dog-friendly upholstery on the sectional in a cozy sitting room adjacent to the kitchen makes it a welcoming space for all the home's occupants.

Architecturally striking—with 18-foot ceilings and a trio of transoms and circular windows that provide views of a manicured landscape created by Dwyer DesignScapes—the great room is a complete expression of the home's diverse design elements. A formerly closeted corner bar was taken out of hiding with handsome walnut cabinetry and mirrored subway tile that provides a unique backdrop for a collection of Kentucky's native spirit.

A one-of-a-kind dining table made by the artisans at Bittners is the focal point of the dining room.



The great room acts as a complete expression of the home's diverse design elements.



His and her vanities bookend the two-person shower in the master bath.

Varying shades of green and treillage-printed drapery in the master bedroom reflect a garden influence.



Varying shades of green in the master bedroom mimic Mother Nature's mastery; treillage-printed drapery underscores the garden influence. It takes creative confidence to use different shades of the same color in close proximity. Ron explained that moving between hues that range from pine-to-lime is successful because it adds dimension to the space.

A lively Miles Redd for Schumacher floral wallpaper in the hallway leading from the bedroom to the master bath elevates what would otherwise be a mundane transition to something extraordinary. The master bath was given a complete facelift within the existing footprint that maintained his and her vanities and closets and a two-person shower.

In the lower level, which boasts a theatre room, a complete kitchen, and a full bath, a former craft room was remade into a bunk room, allowing the couple's children and their friends to gather en masse, but out of sight.

Emboldened by trusting clients, Ron's design precludes the interiors from being boxed into a singular staid era. The entire color spectrum is represented, and family antiques appear right at home alongside pieces with more modern lines. "The mix feels fresh and tells a better story," he explained. "Life doesn't stay within the parameters of a particular period, so our homes shouldn't either." ^{SL}



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