

In a scene reminiscent of *Sophisticated Living's* Jan/Feb 2009 issue cover, a portrait of the homeowners' daughter by John Michael Carter surmounts the fireplace in the living room.



# MAKING RIGHT-SIZED JUST RIGHT

Interior designer Amy Cimba of Bittners helps a long-time client lend a strong feeling of familiarity in a new home.

*Written by Bridget Williams / Photos by Robert Burge*

The decision to downsize is often fraught with tough choices. "Stuff" can be laden with sentimentality, and deciding what stays and what goes likely involves multiple twisting trips down memory lane. For one fortunate homeowner, the daunting process was dialed down with the assistance of Amy Cimba, interior designer and Vice President at Bittners ([bittners.com](http://bittners.com)). Cimba assumed the design mantle following the retirement of Patrick Welsh, who orchestrated the interiors of the homeowners' previous residence—a classically proportioned Stratton Hammon home in a marquee neighborhood (and featured on the cover of *Sophisticated Living's* January/February 2009 issue). She employed her keen eye to imbue the homeowners' present garden home with the same level of gracious elegance, albeit in a smaller package. "The attention to detail is a real nod to antiquity," remarked Cimba.

Chosen design elements and a concerted effort to refine the color scheme harmoniously meld with a collection of acquired and inherited antiques and family treasures that tell the story of a life well and fully lived. "I just love the mix," said the wife. Then, as of now, the wife has stayed true to brown as her "signature color." Tall ceilings and a floor plan with ample proportions provide breathing room for the strategically placed and meticulously organized collection.

The foyer is defined by toile wallpaper, which continues into the first and second-floor corridors. The wife jokingly refers to the subject in "Girl with Nest," by English painter John Hoppner RA (1758 – 1810), as "Scarlett Johansen". The upholstery color on a nearby settee, a piece selected decades ago by Bittners' designer Patrick Welsh, harkens to the eggs depicted in the artwork. A glass finial crowning the newel post at the base of the stairs speaks to the attention paid to even the most minor details.



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The Bittners' woodworking shop created the heirloom quality Sheraton-style pedestal dining table for the homeowners many years ago. Overhead is a Swedish-style crystal and gilt brass chandelier. Chinese Rose Medallion porcelain is displayed on the Sheraton-style sideboard. The abstract painting is by Tamar Kander.



A pagoda-style lantern, lively patterned fabric on the seats of the Chinoiserie-style dining chairs, accent pillows, and armchair, along with pops of blue add a touch of whimsy to the light-filled family room.







Architectural details, including decorative trim above the door and built-ins on either side of the fireplace, make the living room an ideal display space. Cimba added decorative tape trim to update a pair of ticking stripe chairs. Above the hearth is a portrait by John Michael Carter of the homeowners' daughter as a young girl. Pointing out a few examples scattered around the room, Cimba remarked that the wife is "a needle pointing phenom" and added that her creations make the home come alive during Christmas.

The home is the kind of place where the layers reveal themselves the longer you linger. On my second pass through the light-filled family room, I noticed that the base of a lamp placed beneath a gilt wood starburst mirror is comprised of blue agate slices. The space is more casual but still playfully elegant with brick walls painted white, chinoiserie accents and pops of blue.

A vintage pine mantel surrounds the kitchen's hearth, crowned by a collection of perennially popular qinghua porcelain. To get the layout of the tiled backsplash just right, Cimba laid all the handmade tiles on the floor to make it easier to eliminate those whose colors were deemed "too rusty." While the wife is partial to a white kitchen, she said she doesn't like "white white," so Cimba worked hard to find the perfect complex cream hue to paint the cabinetry.

Cimba referred to the installation of a grand mirror in the powder room as a "team effort." The wife said it was a worthy endeavor because of the feeling of spaciousness it adds to the compact space, dressed in Schumacher - Acanthus Stripe sisal wallpaper. The light fixture was acquired from Charleston. Cimba chose the PHYLRICH faucet "to add some serious drama."

An heirloom of more recent provenance, the Bittners-made dining table with banded inlay is a non-negotiable piece that has moved from home to home. "I advise young clients to invest in one great piece a year to create their own eventual heirlooms," said Cimba. Juxtaposed against the room's traditional casegoods is an abstract painting by Tamar Kander surmounting a sideboard topped with an ornate silver English tea and coffee set.

An armoire in the primary bedroom was acquired in Atlanta, where a men's clothing store borrowed it from a local antique shop to merchandise its products. The tall, upholstered headboard with nailhead trim fits perfectly between two windows. Across the hall, a four-poster bed and coordinating Leontine Linens shower curtain and towels lend a fanciful touch to a guest suite.

Through careful collaboration, Cimba has shown that even a downsized home can be where your heart *and* stuff are. **sl**



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