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Second ACT

A CREATIVE DESIGNER BRIGHTENS A
STATELY MEMPHIS RESIDENCE WITH UPBEAT
COLORS AND SOPHISTICATED FLOURISHES.

WRITTEN BY MINDY PANTIEL / PHOTOGRAPHY BY KARYN MILLET



"In the family room, the goal was to seamlessly blend with the outdoors, and Farrow & Ball's Down Pipe paint makes the connection," explains designer Parrish Cameron Robe Chilcoat, who strategically placed the CFC dining table and Noir chairs for enjoying Memphis mornings. Lamps by Kelly Wearstler for Visual Comfort & Co. flank the Harbinger sofa and the custom ottoman wears Pindler faux leather. A Tree of Life triptych by Natural Curiosities contributes whimsy.

It's true that the most successful design projects often stem from a sense of familiarity and alignment of tastes, but when the designer happens to be actual family, the results tend to be even more in sync. Such was the case for a special Memphis manse updated by designer Parrish Cameron Robe Chilcoat. Selected for her upbeat West Coast style, Chilcoat came to the project with the added advantage of being the wife's cousin. "As girls we lived near each other in Florida and spent holidays together," Chilcoat shares. "And as women we discovered a mutual interest in interior design."

Owners Allison and Richard Smith had previously tapped Chilcoat's talents for their former Memphis abode, and although Allison had once considered it their forever home, fate had other plans. The opportunity for Richard to walk through a residence designed by renowned Mississippi architect Lewis Graeber III changed everything. Upon spying the three-story spiral staircase, barrel-vaulted ceilings and intricate millwork, "I just had to have it," a besotted Richard recalls. Happily settled at their existing residence, his wife, however, was not similarly inclined to relocate. When she finally acquiesced, it was with one caveat: that their new home's interiors closely resemble their previous one, complete with her cousin's signature use of color. Thankfully, Chilcoat was able to return to Memphis for the task.

Dubbed the "relaxation zone," the sun room is where homeowner Allison Smith regularly cocoons, with the screened space allowing for bug-free enjoyment of the outdoors (a worthy concern in the South). With the exception of the slatted Janus et Cie coffee table, all furnishings in the space were repurposed from the family's previous residence.



The plan was to reuse as much as possible. "Most of their existing furnishings were custom and some just needed to be reupholstered," says Chilcoat, who focused on composing multifunctional spaces to suit the scale of the much larger residence. "The great room, wine cellar and library sold me on the house," reveals Richard, who serves as regional president of the Americas for FedEx Express and, as one of 10 siblings, wanted a welcoming atmosphere for him, Allison and their two children, as well as legions of nieces and nephews, to hang out. But the usefulness of those areas for business meetings only added to the home's appeal. In Richard's library, for example, Chilcoat kept the existing stained woodwork, complementing it with navy walls and wool draperies reminiscent of men's suiting; the results feel fresh, yet appropriate for the room's

traditional bones and professional purpose. "We wanted furniture to look young and contemporary with more clean lines, but still classic," explains the designer who, in contrast, fashioned the family room as a more private refuge. "The deep gray walls and dark stained ceiling bring out the trees. I wanted it to feel cozy and inviting for evening, but also quiet and restful during the day."

Offsetting the grandeur of the architecture, "relaxed, fun elements gave the decorating excitement," Chilcoat adds. "It's a livable approach, not too overthought or too perfect." It was in that spirit that the curving staircase, once cream-colored, received a wash of blue-green paint. "I thought it would be so impactful to highlight its curvature," the designer explains. "It's almost like a fabric that's threaded three stories tall."

With "fresh" being the operative word, the home's kitchen cabinets were lightened using Pratt & Lambert's Windham paint. A backsplash of shimmering Ann Sacks tiles provides a bohemian accent. A trio of Noir counter stools wears Archtex's Reptile textile while Kelly Wearstler's Precision pendants for Visual Comfort & Co. hang above.



Left: "We wanted to accentuate the incredible lines and workmanship of the existing staircase," says Chilcoat, who retained its original lantern-and-ropes fixture but refreshed its formerly cream-colored baseboards and risers with Benjamin Moore's Amazon Green. The dynamic shade has the effect of drawing one's eye to the circular formation of the spiral, which reads like a work of sculpture.

Opposite: A Currey & Company chandelier composed of round glass discs suspends from the dining room's freshly painted white ceiling, adding to its debonair appearance. "It is an amazing backdrop for dinner parties," shares the designer, who corralled vintage-style French chairs by RH around a Keith Fritz dining table from Jasper in Los Angeles. The rug is by Merida.



Dramatic navy walls and Pindler draperies pop against stained millwork, contributing to the regal tone of the library. Business tasks are handled at the Lawson-Fenning desk, while a custom sofa donning Schumacher's Gainsborough velvet and tufted chairs covered in a Holland & Sherry twill supply seating for casual meetings. The Brooks table lamp is by J. Randall Powers for Visual Comfort & Co.



While every effort was made to maintain Graeber's foundational architecture, painting the original dark brown vaulted ceiling in the dining room a brighter white had the effect of lightening the overall ambience while allowing the room's existing wall mural to pop. Similarly, in a sitting room off the master suite, a fresh coat of lavender paint gave a wall of built-ins new life. "Parrish pushed it, and she was right," Allison says of the whimsical interjection. As for Richard: "I work for FedEx, so she didn't have to sell me on the purple," he jokes of his company's logo.

Due to the impressive architecture, few interior revisions felt necessary and were mostly down to refinements, which the designer relied upon general contractor Reid Hedgepeth to problem solve throughout. "He worked seamlessly with our firm," she notes. For example, "When the master bathroom tiles arrived broken and the installation became very labor-intensive, he just figured it out."

The home's preexisting grace continued well into the landscape, where the established property had been meticulously maintained. Landscape architect Marley Fields saw her job chiefly as one of enhancement: "We edited existing plantings to better complement the family's activity," she says. "For example, the pool area was walled by a tall holly hedge, and to open views to the pool from the house and connect the expansive lower lawn, we removed the hedge for more visibility and connection to adjacent gardens."

Today, Allison's early misgivings are a thing of the past, and the Smiths believe their new home responds directly to the way they live. "It was very important to both of us that the house didn't feel like a museum," Richard expresses. "We are light-hearted people; the house definitely reflects who we are." ■

"The style and tone of the garden was already set, so we expanded upon that with timeless and classic plants that provide seasonal interest," explains landscape architect Marley Fields. "Hydrangeas surrounding the pool garden, for example, are beautiful throughout the summer swim months."