



Mixing
OLD
STYLE
in the
NEW
SOUTH

**JANIE HIRSCH
TALKS**

timeless
HOME DESIGN



written by **JENNIFER COLOSIMO**

photography courtesy of **J. HIRSCH INTERIORS**

When I moved into my house, I certainly had a process for making it feel like home. It was finally my chance to decorate floor-to-ceiling the way I wanted to, sans opinionated roommates or rental restrictions. I combed Pinterest, made weekly (maybe more) appearances at Home Goods and did a lot of spray painting. A lot.

A year later, I am still doing most of those things. I decide to move a chair here, or change a piece of art there. It makes me question the clarity of my process, but might it also tie into the fact that being a professional interior designer is an idea I've always entertained? After meeting Janie Hirsch, I settled on the latter.

I met Hirsch in Gwinnett county's quaint Berkeley Lake community, where we drank coffee at her alder wood Bausman Country English Trestle Table ... in other words, her casual, everyday kitchen table. While pieces in any home are important for different reasons — the right bed for good sleep, a wine cellar for collecting vintages, a great sofa for entertaining — for Hirsch, the dining or breakfast table is a top priority because it's where family and friends gather for hearty meals, lively conversation or simply to catch up on the day. Or, in my case, to possibly further inspire a dramatic career change.

**THE ROOT OF
THE MATTER**

One misconception I made about Hirsch was that her home — and her design ideas — would feature pieces from and inspired by her past, growing up in Lake Charles, La. with an architect and furniture builder for a father. But, no, she doesn't have any of her father's furniture. Instead, her home highlights examples of his breathtaking watercolors.

"I grew up around design my entire life," Hirsch said. "It was just kind of always ingrained into me." That led her to Louisiana State University, where she

decided to pursue a degree in her father's footsteps, but found her own footing in interior design. "[His influence has always been there], but I think it was more that I didn't necessarily want to do structures and systems. I wanted to do more of the ... space planning, layout and finishes."

Hirsch packed up as soon as she threw her cap. Having never even been to New York City before, she spent a summer there with the lighting design firm, Jerry Kugler & Associates.

"Of course my dad was terrified," Hirsch remembered, laughing. "But it was a great experience and I learned a lot. I did some really outstanding projects while I was there, such as The Penn Club, Davidoff's Rodeo Drive store and lighting an extensive art collection inside a penthouse apartment."

She also met her husband and decided it was time to head back to the South. The two packed up and enjoyed a short stint in Hilton Head before making the move to the Northside 22 years ago. Despite bouncing around a bit within the area, they love it here and for good reason.

The equidistance between clients as business owner of J. Hirsch Interior Design is ideal. Currently, she's working on two south of town, a farmhouse and working horse farm in Sharpsburg that they rebuilt from the ground up, plus another one at Serenbe. On the Northside, she's working inside Chateau Elan, in Cumming and in Buckhead ... just to name a few.

A SIGNATURE STYLE

So who are these people who ditch their to-do lists and release a design project to the professionals? Hirsch puts them in two categories: home owners who need all new furnishings and possibly some remodeling while the second group consists of people who want to refresh what they already have.

"That's a great thing about design," Hirsch said. "There are no rules, necessarily, that can't be broken. It's more about making sure your scale is correct and



making things work together. The days of having a bedroom suite of furniture are gone. We don't want everything to match. Mixing materials brings character and warmth to a space."

"[As designers], we always think we don't have a signature style," Hirsch said about why her clients have hired her, specifically. "But we really do. Mine, I think, is simply classic and tailored. It's something that feels like you can mix new and old and get a look that seems like it has grown over time. That's what I like to do."

She also likes to do modern, albeit outside her comfort zone. She loves old time-worn antique finds. She loved wallpaper in the '90s and worked with the all-white

craze of the early 2000s; but, in her words, a true designer listens to what the client wants and designs for them. It may not necessarily be her style or what she has in her home, but blending their ideas with her professional eye is what delivers the best result.

MADAME PRESIDENT

Perhaps this talent of hers is what colleagues saw that led to her current position as President of ASID (American Society of Interior Designers) for the Georgia chapter. Almost a decade ago, she got a call to serve on a committee for the Design Excellence Awards. The next year, she was chair. The next, director at large for programs.



WHAT'S IN RIGHT NOW

Trends come and go, but some design ideas are timeless. Janie Hirsch offers her top evergreen elements for expert style.

COLOR IS THE NEW NEUTRAL

"I love color and I like to use it everywhere, but in a subtle way. There are so many beautiful fabrics with green that are so lovely and fresh and make me happy. In my house, pale green is everywhere, but you wouldn't walk in and say, 'This is a green house.'"

PRETTY IS BACK

"We've been very into the minimal look — a lack of details, no moldings or trims. People paired down with the economy, but now, they are okay bringing in details of paneling, casings or a simple tape on a window treatment again."

GRAY GOES WITH EVERYTHING

"Gray is such a great neutral. It's better than the beiges and tans and looks good with almost any color you could possibly pair with it. Everything used to be all white, and that's hard to keep clean. Gray is the perfect compromise."

OLD IS NEW AGAIN

"More people are inheriting antiques from their families that they want to incorporate into their more modern taste. Others seek those pieces out because they want that eclectic feel. It doesn't always work, but when it does, it's an extremely unique look for them."

● J. HIRSCH INTERIORS

growing. We have a design community and resources that other towns don't have." In fact, Hirsch said that Atlanta, as a big city like New York or Los Angeles, has a uniqueness to its design talent and taste that is evident considering its accrued accolades.

"We are continually touted as one of the top chapters in the country," Hirsch said. "We host events that [others] have tried to copy or emulate and we have ASID designers that are consistently featured in local and national magazines."

The chapter has a number of members that have been on the national board or part of a national committee, as well as many who have been inducted into the Council of Fellows, which is only bestowed on about one percent of the interior design membership. Hirsch has been appointed to be on a national committee (Chapter Support Team) for the next two years starting in October, where she will work with a region of other ASID presidents.

FOUNDATIONS FOR FRIENDSHIP

What all designers know is how important the relationship is with their clients. They know the questions to ask and how to narrow down lists (like my own, which continues to grow).

"I listen to them. I try to figure out what they want," Hirsch said. "Talking is key. And then, it's finding out how to use the space. Sometimes it's obvious, like a dining room, but other times, people just have a blank space and don't know how they want to use it. I have to get into their mind and figure [it] out."

She asks for pictures, whether from magazines, Houzz, her website or anything that will give her an idea of what they like. Often, there is a theme — like color, a certain type of furniture or even lighting style.

"When they don't know the answers, I ask to see their closet," Hirsch said. "The colors they buy to wear will often be what

they want to be surrounded by in their home."

Hirsch shared one client's feedback who called her many months after a project had been completed, seeing it published in a local magazine. Her client said, "I don't know how you figured it out, but you gave me exactly what I wanted. Everyday I wake up and just love what you did for me."

Hirsch said that's the absolute best thing she could ask for in her job.

"It's their home, not mine. I want them to enjoy it and be happy to come home and spend time in it. It's a partnership, but also a relationship. Yes, I am working for them, but a lot of times, you become their friend."

Maybe instead of that career change, I'll settle for friends like her. 🐾

● FOR MORE INFORMATION
jhirschinteriors.com



AN Antiques ALL-STAR

THIS WON'T BE THE LAST time you hear the chatter about the "old is new again" trend and there are several designers in town that agree with Hirsch. Trayce Thomas Carr, for one, opened a shop in Buckhead's East Andrews neighborhood to exercise that exact idea to its fullest extent.

As soon as a space became available, she opened Vintage — a fresh collection from around the world and our own back yard. Carr is an expert in making antique or vintage pieces work with modern design and explained that at Vintage, it's easy for customers to create that look, too. Whether

it's mixing in a piece they've inherited or one they've bought, Carr has created an inventory that

includes a little of the high and the low to easily mix and match within a set budget. She stocks only antiques or handmade items — from local furniture to unique fabrics, Italian pottery to made-in-house pillows — and adds an unexpected element with eclectic mounted antlers, a collection of coral and a constantly changing crowd of one-of-a-kind lighting. And that's just what your eyes can see in the first 60 seconds.

"European antiques have always been my thing," Carr said. "I love to be able to incorporate unique pieces into my designs by making interesting pairings

— like a piece of abstract art over an old, painted wood piece."

One way to grab attention? Carr said to think in pillows — a simple sofa can look outstanding in a room when it has brilliant, nice pillows. Instead of ditching old furniture, she also recommended updating it with modern lamps or accessories that will bring out the character in both. And, play with natural textures to create your own detail-driven décor element like shells or sea glass gathered in a beautiful footed bowl.

Luckily, Carr welcomes organized inspiration boards or total blank canvases from the clients who pop into her store — both design journeys promise to deliver that riveting final touch, no matter how old or new your own collection already is. vintagebyttc.com

VINTAGE BY TTC PHOTOS COURTESY OF BIRDS OF A FEATHER CREATIVE