



TEXT KATE MISSINE PHOTOGRAPHY MALI AZIMA STYLING LILY GATINS INTERIOR DESIGN MUSSO DESIGN GROUP ARCHITECTURE HARRISON DESIGN

A collection of 19th-century French cutting boards lend a cozy touch to a classic ebony-and-ivory kitchen. A Francois & Co vent hood and



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TRAVEL ENTHUSIASTS
AND AVID GOLFERS ARE REINVIGORATED
BY THEIR FAMILY MOVE TO A
NORTHEASTERN SUBURB
OF ATLANTA

vintage Italian vases evoke the owners' love of Florence.



“OFTEN DESIGNERS GET CAUGHT UP IN THEMES, BUT THERE’S SOMETHING SO EASY ABOUT HAVING EACH PIECE MOVEABLE,” VAN DEN BERGH NOTES. “IN A HOUSE THIS LARGE, YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE IT VERY COMPLICATED. WE DIDN’T COMPLICATE IT.”

A brick and stone exterior, limestone entrance and timber trusses mark this home’s classical Tudor features. Soaring ceilings and a dramatic center hall with a circular staircase lend the open floor plan a sense of Old-World grandeur, grounded with simple finishes and minimal trim. **Above:** Custom Christian Liaigre settees and Dennis & Leen pendants bring simple lines to the formal living room. A gold-toned Thayer Coggin cocktail table, Regency-style mirror and lush layered carpets add Old-World opulence. **Above Right:** A dramatically sweeping staircase highlights the circular foyer, echoed by a curved Christian Liaigre leather bench. A grouping of Ron van Dongen photographs provides a clean-cut contrast to a 19th-century French needlepoint chair.



SETH VAN DEN BERGH, interior design guru at Atlanta’s MUSSO Design Group, shares an observation; “Two years of working together, you really start to become a part of someone’s family. It’s bittersweet when a project comes to an end.”

Beyond its impressive size at 20,000 square feet, the project in question, a newly constructed home in Georgia’s Brookhaven district, came with the unique challenge of both a fresh start and a historic sensibility.

Envisioning the opportunity, this family didn’t keep any of their previous furniture or artwork; this tag team knew they were in for a difficult yet interesting road ahead. “The clients didn’t want anything fussy,” declares van den Bergh; “just a place that was simple but as historically true as they could get. They were not out to turn heads. Yet they wanted to turn a new leaf.”

The design team scoured antique dealers for pieces that would evoke emotions and memories. Taking into consideration the couple’s love for travel, particularly Florence and Barcelona, inspired a focus on Baroque, Regency, Italian and Spanish styles. “You have to know this emotion is real, otherwise things can start to feel artificial, like a showroom,” comments the designer.

A display of 19th-century European wooden cutting boards warms up the classic yet homey kitchen. “There’s a heartiness about them that creates this beautiful moment,” describes van den Bergh. “The owner cooks, but she doesn’t make complicated meals; she cooks things like tater-tot casserole; comfort food.”

A majestic 18-foot mantel, topped with an antique Regency mirror, anchors the double-height living area, while clean-lined Christian Liaigre settees, David latesta stools and contemporary pendant lights provide a modern counterbalance to an antique armchair and a 15th-century-inspired commode. Another Liaigre piece shines in the foyer – a curved leather bench embossed with quatrefoil that is one of van den Bergh’s favorites. “We stumbled into the showroom and it was serendipitous for that large circular foyer,” the designer recalls. “There’s something beautiful about a curved piece of furniture.”



“IF A CLIENT BRINGS AN EXISTING PIECE WITH THEM, YOU CAN PIGGYBACK ON THAT TO SET THE TONE,” EXPRESSES VAN DEN BERGH, “BUT THEY DIDN’T WANT TO BRING ANYTHING, SO YOU’RE HELPING CREATE A PLACE THAT HAS A HISTORY WITHOUT ANY ACTUAL HISTORY.”

Opposite: Saffron-hued Louis XIII antique walnut armchairs and a teal stool infuse color in the dining room, centered around a solid dining table and sideboard by Parish & Co. **Top Left:** A sitting room on the second floor is set with comfortable glider armchairs, to accommodate the owner’s daughters’ nursing babies and secret sister chit-chat. **Bottom Left:** The master bedroom sets a modern theme with a sleek bed frame and charcoal palette, complemented with a painting by a local Atlanta artist. An original 18th-century horsehair canapé acts as a unique window seat next to a Noguchi-inspired midcentury sculpture.





Above: A velvet armchair brings an unexpected element to the timeless, light-flooded bath and simple standalone tub. **Opposite:** An elegant mother-in-law suite provides a refined bed-and-breakfast style getaway, accented with c. 1760 tiger-print velvet benches, upholstered Ochre & Holland & Sherry headboard, and Hermès tea set.



Comfort in general seems to be a prevailing theme: each space is thoughtfully designed with its inhabitants in mind first. Upstairs, a sitting area unites the daughters' guest bedrooms with cushy recliners for nursing babies and bonding moments between sisters; while a pretty and peaceful mother-in-law suite offers the owner's eighty-year-old mother a quiet respite from a household of young grandkids.

"At the heart of it, it's a family that lives here, watches football games and hosts grandchildren," says van den Bergh. "There's a common-sense approach – practical, sensible, beautiful pieces, but nothing too precious."

In the same sensible vein, the designer points out, no room is set in stone. Every piece of furniture is interchangeable, easily switched up for impromptu gatherings or just a change of pace.

"Often designers get caught up in themes, but there's something so easy about having each piece moveable," he notes. "In a house that large, you have the opportunity to make it very complicated. We didn't complicate it."

Plenty of understated treasures peek out, nonchalantly – from a c. 1800 Italian gilt frame in the foyer, to the dainty Hermès tea set in the mother-in-law room. For van den Bergh, though, there is something more priceless to his work.

"When someone speaks so highly of your work that it brings you to tears, that's when you know you've done a good job," he shares, recalling a touching moment attending the couple's housewarming party. "It was as if I were a built-in member of the family. When there's an emotional connection that's so powerful, it can change lives."