

Southern home



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Creating timeless interiors that clients will enjoy for years to come is something designers strive to accomplish. Sometimes they are only asked to update a room or two and sometimes they are handed that desirable blank slate. “I was fortunate to start this project from the very beginning,” explains Julie Couch of Julie Couch Interiors in Nashville. “The homeowners and I only had the architect’s plans in hand when we first met and began talking about finishes, both exterior and interior.

Couch colored in that blank slate to great effect in every corner of this elegant home. “It was important that the home be a marriage of old and new,” she explains. “I am drawn to contrasts. And although my clients initially gravitated toward traditional pieces, they were open to using antiques and modern art to keep it interesting.”

One brilliant move came in the simple use of paint. Couch suggested that the two largest rooms be painted an engaging grey, green color to set them apart from the classic neutral palette in the rest of the home. “I did not want these rooms to look like big beige boxes,” says the designer. “We tried the color, and my clients were on board.” The look is elegant and provides a perfect background for the pale shades of upholstery. “When we started selecting furniture, we decided that the dominant pieces would be quieter neutrals, so that we would have limitless opportunities to bring in color through art and accessories,” she says.

Facing page: A plain black console table juxtaposes the more feminine elements in the foyer area, which includes a dramatic Oly Studio mirror balanced by a pair of chairs, lamps, and paintings by Susie Bettenhausen. Above left: The choicest spot in the house is perhaps the living room day bed dressed in a white cover with a design in gold tones. Above right: It is hard to miss the huge abstract artwork by Erin McIntosh that Julie had commissioned especially for the room. Right: Linen slipcovered host chairs bring a casual note to the room and are a welcome contrast to the wooden chairs.





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— JULIE COUCH



Above and left: A pair of white console tables with an iridescent finish flank the dining room topped with art by Lisa Moore. Shapely lamps with a botanical motif and touches of brass, picked up from antique stores around town, finish the look. Right: A large, elegant cased opening connects the dining room to the foyer. The homeowners wanted a formal dining room, but it is certainly not too stuffy or traditional with its mix of finishes and chairs, varying shades of white tones, and contemporary art.





Facing page: A dramatic coffered ceiling sets off the den, which due to its size, needed lots of seating options that are mixed and matched to great effect. Bottom left: "This lamp is actually handmade pottery by Charlie West, so it has a more rustic finish and is a perfect contrast to the more refined table; it really is about the balance," says Couch. Bottom right: Bookcases with carefully chosen treasures help tie the color palette together in the den. Right: "My clients did not want a stark white kitchen, so we used creamy counters. Bottom, right: In the family-friendly breakfast room, she chose less expensive pieces and slipcovered the chairs in a washable fabric.



In a large new house, small antique pieces can look lost and childlike, but adding size can still be sophisticated as this home shows off so well. "The rooms are very large, but I intentionally chose tailored and clean-lined pieces. As a result, even the bigger chairs and sofas never feel messy," says Couch. "Though the home is quite grand in some aspects, it still feels cozy and very welcoming."

She knew that anything too stuffy would not fit her clients' age and stage in life and this included the dining room. "Since it is becoming increasingly rare that clients ask me to create formal dining rooms, I had great fun with this one," the designer explains. She started with a classic table, and then added feminine chairs with curves, finally layering in contemporary pieces such as the white console tables, lamps, and art. To keep the room from going too formal, more casual elements appear such as the linen slipcovered host chairs and benches in an unexpected hand-blocked print.

Several commissioned pieces bring additional character, including a large abstract painting, which is the star of the living room. Couch also included old silver and brass accents for a sense of history and needed patina. "In a new home, it is more important than ever that the rooms look layered and collected," she says. "That balance is crucial to giving the interiors a desired look that feels evolved and not acquired overnight." And of course, it also feels timeless.





Left: "My clients asked for a really calm and soft master bedroom, so we used a gray-blue shade on the walls with a neutral tufted upholstered headboard," Couch says. Contemporary touches such as lamps, art, and a chest accented with nailheads give the room some needed detail while keeping the overall soothing feel. Above: Couch strived to follow her clients' love of tradition but not let it cross over into stuffy. She accomplished this with accessories like the clear glass lamps from Robert Abbey and a framed intaglio at the bedside. Right: The master bath has such beautiful natural light that everything is intentionally simple with unlined linen café curtains.

