



A Good Vintage

In Birmingham, a young family breathes an exuberant new spirit into their midcentury home.

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Designers Elizabeth Miles and Janie Jones created a jewel box effect in the blue-toned bar of this Mountain Brook, Alabama, residence. The ruddy tones of a vintage rug from Paige Albright Orientals and a framed oil painting by Louisiana folk artist Lorraine Gendron lend appealing contrasts. In the dining room beyond, Kelly Wearstler's Rousseau chandelier for Visual Comfort & Co. illuminates a tableau of colorful vases and cachepots from Ruby Ansley Interiors.

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ife in a midcentury abode in Mountain Brook—a Birmingham suburb beloved for its charming in-town villages—certainly had heaps of appeal for its owners. But craving a floor plan that would better suit them and

their two young sons, the couple contemplated whether to leave or to stay. After two years of searching for an alternative, the answer became clear: “There is never a right time to gut your house,” remarks the wife, “but we love our neighborhood. We realized there was no better place for us.” Luckily, she and her husband found the right collaborator in residential designer James B. Laughlin. Having grown up close by, he brought the perfect combination of familiarity and fresh vision. “Jimmy understood the neighborhood and respected its integrity,” the wife explains. Adding designers Elizabeth Miles and Janie Jones, a duo best known for bridging the gap between traditional and midcentury elements, ensured a residential redo that would be better than new. The result is a cheerfully contemporary home that still exudes 1950s charm, hosting black tie dinners and children’s birthday parties with equal aplomb.

“The house had great bones but was in desperate need of a style injection,” Laughlin recounts. Key to the renovation was refreshing its existing red-brick exterior and formerly foreboding front door. “It wasn’t the most glamorous house on the street,” he admits. So for the home’s reinvention, “we wanted to create something with more character; a jewel box of sorts.” Laughlin created what he calls “a more 1920s look”—still petite and low-slung like the original, but with a bit more grace and refinement, courtesy of a new white-washed brick façade, classic dentil molding and custom Spanish cedar French doors that open to an Ashland-patterned bluestone terrace.

Working with builder Robert Fry, Laughlin—who draws everything by hand—likewise reconfigured the interior layout. “The original house was somewhat maze-like and lacking an intuitive flow,” he explains. Now, the entrance allows better connection to the grounds, with children running in and out, dinner guests spilling out onto the terrace, and the main living areas and bedrooms positioned to overlook the wooded landscape behind the house. “We used

real materials and 100-year-old construction methods,” Laughlin continues. “Tying old to new and making it seem seamless can be a challenge, but Robert did it.”

While the renovation was taking shape, Miles and Jones got to work fashioning interiors that are traditional without being stuffy, elegant without being prim. “Our client is originally from New Orleans and loves to entertain, so we wanted the house to be colorful, fun and approachable,” Jones explains. As a family of game-players and readers, their clients’ must-haves included a custom dining table that separates into three smaller tables for poker night and a genteel library that Laughlin outfitted with quartersawn white-oak built-ins. But the room isn’t just any book repository; “this is a sexy, sophisticated study,” says Jones. The green-hued nook features a tufted sofa custom made for the husband, an animal-print rug and a roundel window—a classical touch that’s quintessentially Laughlin. Says Miles: “As the masculine counterpart to the feminine floral chinoiserie of the dining room, it makes for a beautiful juxtaposition.” Beyond the dining room’s painted double doors, she and Jones bedecked the bar with sky blue grass cloth and coordinating high-gloss trim, creating a truly memorable design moment. “Elizabeth and Janie leaned in to maximalism, which was a new concept to me,” the wife notes. “But they did it tastefully.”

In the family room, presided over by a framed panel of Gucci’s heron wallpaper, a comparatively neutral palette takes effect. “You can watch the seasons change through the windows,” Jones reveals. And because their clients’ bedroom faces the treetops, the pair chose sage green upholstery for the bed, cossetting the space with ivory draperies and framed botanical studies that pay respect to the wooded surroundings. Adds Miles: “The windows unveil the lush foliage; a canvas of trees and sky to outline nature’s beauty.”

Reflecting on the project, the wife says she sensed tremendous dedication from the design team at all stages. “It’s like they were all building their own home, and everyone rolled up their sleeves,” she recounts. “Jimmy and Robert brought in the right amount of light and detail, while Elizabeth and Janie injected the New Orleans character I love: *laissez-faire*, revelry, hospitality—and a little indulgence,” she effuses. “This house is comfortable, curated and intentional. For us, there’s no better place to be.” ■



“The study is a very sophisticated space, enveloped by saturated hues and rich textiles.”

—JANIE JONES

In the study, Benjamin Moore's Sweet Basil paint sets off quartersawn white-oak built-ins by JLP Inc. and a tufted velvet settee by Grant Trick Furnishings. Teamed with Arteriors' Sorello sconces, Visual Comfort & Co. picture lights and Baldwin door levers, the gold-tipped legs of Highland House's Earl side table serve as jewelry-like accents. Jasper's florid Malmaison cotton-linen covers the Chairish-sourced vintage chairs.



Above: Gracie's Secluded Garden wallpaper envelops the dining room, which centers on a bespoke burl wood table by The CEH in Dallas, paired with Worlds Away Jude dining chairs from JDouglas in Atlanta. Draperies of celery-green glazed cotton by Norbar Fabrics frame the French doors as Arteriors' Calla sconces flank a prized 19th-century secretary in the entryway beyond.

Opposite: A Newport Brass faucet reiterates the finish of Brandino Brass-sourced hardware in the bar, where walls are clad in Schumacher's Robin's Egg blue sisal and the trim benefits from the glossy sheen of Benjamin Moore's Newburg Green paint. On the floating shelves, various vessels from ALKMY, Ruby Ansley Interiors and Shoppe converse with a conversation-sparking cloisonné vase from R. Runberg Curiosities in Charlotte. A vintage French sunburst fixture from Istdibs crowns the scene.





Left: In the powder room, Sister Parish's Boxwood Stripe wallpaper provides the backdrop for a custom fluted vanity by JLP Inc. painted Farrow & Ball's coordinating Calke Green. Continuing the warm tones of the Colonial Bronze cabinet hardware, Worlds Away's shapely Adina mirror complements the graceful curves of Julie Neill's Clarice Double sconces for Visual Comfort & Co. at either side.

Opposite: The primary bedroom combines calming neutrals with nods to nature, beginning with framed 19th-century botanical lithographs from Chairish. Bernhard's Bayonne bed, upholstered in a sage textile by Norbar Fabrics, complements the verdant hue of Alexa Hampton's Penelope table lamp for Visual Comfort & Co., which rests upon a Worlds Away shagreen nightstand. The scalloped Euro shams are by Leontine Linens.

