

HIDDEN POTENTIAL

A Buckhead couple feels right at home again in their historic manse thanks to a design overhaul by a trio of Atlanta talents

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The New Formal
An oversize Gracie wallpaper mural and an early 19th-century chandelier from Robuck set the stage for elegant meals in the dining room. The table is from Holland MacRae and the curtains feature a silk embroidered fabric by Chelsea Textiles.



Warm Welcome

Liza Bryan rearranged the family room to be more conducive to comfort and conversation. Newly purchased items include a French chestnut coffee table from Dearing Antiques and window treatments featuring Misty Paisley by Mulberry Home Fabrics. The draperies are by Willard Pitt Curtain Makers.

AFTER SPENDING NEARLY TWO decades in their 1930s Buckhead manse, a civic-minded couple was ready to shake things up. They considered moving in hopes of finding a home with a larger yard, but when their two-year long search repeatedly came up short, the couple shifted their focus to transforming their historic Georgian home into their forever home.

They began slowly, starting with a simple update to the library. "Really, the whole renovation started with just adding a pair of French doors," says interior designer Liza Bryan, who the couple enlisted after viewing her work on a neighboring Neel Reid estate. "The library had a small, single window that wasn't providing much of a view or connection to the outdoors." So they turned to the couple's longtime go-to architect Ward Seymour (who came out of retirement as a favor) to oversee the addition of French doors complete with a Juliet balcony that now bathes the library in natural light.



Lightly Dressed
above Natural light floods into a cozy breakfast nook. opposite The hallway leading to a garage addition features a Chinese stone horse from The Nicholson Gallery and an octagonal mirror by Formations at Jerry Pair.

“They’re able to truly love a place that they almost thought about selling. I’m so glad they gave it a second chance.” —Liza Bryan





On Display
left Warmth envelops the family room with understated reds, browns and beiges. The Italian leather chair is from Jacqueline Adams Antiques. *below* A grouping of famille rose porcelain mixes with other prized antiques in a corner of the living room. *opposite* A corridor off the family room showcases the wife's Imari porcelain collection.

Pleased with the transformation, it wasn't long before the couple started considering other ways of freshening up their home. Thankfully, Bryan was already one step ahead. "When we first met and I walked through the house, I saw a lot of very pretty things but they were just not in the right place or creating any impact," she recalls. So after brightening up the walls (they were previously a range of historic colors, but deemed too "muddy") and widening cased room openings for a better sense of flow, Bryan began what she playfully refers to as "musical chairs"—moving the couple's extensive collection of art and antiques around from room to room until just the right spot was found. For example, an oversize mural fashioned from a Gracie wallpaper that was once out-of-sight now takes pride of place in the dining room, while a 1923 still life entitled "Tea and Strawberries" was hung in the master bedroom so that the couple can now wake up to their favorite painting every morning.

Bryan also transformed seldom-used rooms into more approachable spaces, the most notable being the sunroom. Doors leading to the living room were removed for a more welcoming touch, and a





Collector's Items

Existing bookshelves in the library were dressed up with molding and other detailing to match the sophistication of the couple's leather book collection. Bryan reupholstered the wing chair and brought in the leather settee that was once located in the dining room.

table-and-chairs arrangement now makes it a multipurpose space—an impromptu office for answering emails to a sunny spot for brunch.

While Bryan continued to finesse the interiors, the homeowners set their sights on their backyard, or lack thereof. Consisting of a small patio and no lawn, the steep, overgrown site left much to be desired by the outdoor-loving couple with a passion for gardening. So they turned to landscape architect John Howard and architect William B. Litchfield for a solution.

Undeterred by the land's deep ravine, Howard "lifted the property" he says with a series of retaining walls that allowed for the creation of cascading green spaces that lead to a newly built folly on axis with the library. "I wanted the structure to be a stimulating feature of the garden design, and really everything in the backyard evolved from that," notes Howard.

With the folly set to be the centerpiece, Litchfield spared no detail, a hallmark of the classically trained architect. "In researching folly structures from Virginia to the Carolinas to Georgia, and even as far over as Louisiana, this octagonal image kept coming up," he says. Litchfield used the striking shape as the foundation of the folly



Natural Order
Landscape architect
John Howard of
Howard Design sited
the backyard's octagonal
folly on axis with
the library.



Gather Around
left An intimate seating
area features an 18th-
century horse trough
repurposed into a foun-
tain. *below* Inspired by
a photo of boiserie in
an old French château,
Bryan commissioned
The Finishing Source
to repaint the client's
existing trumeau mirror.
Unique accents such
as a limewashed chan-
delier by Koektrommel
adds to the folly's
worldly appeal.

design, but while follies are historically meant purely for decorative purposes, this particular structure was planned as a multifunctional space. So while it offers the couple a serene spot to enjoy a glass of wine amid the trees, it also doubles as the wife's art studio.

On warm days, she can open the folly's series of grand 10-foot iron doors for fresh air or switch on the heated flooring during cooler months. These modern conveniences are seamlessly integrated amid more period-authentic flourishes by Litchfield, including plaster walls and reclaimed limestone floors. Overhead, exposed wood framing follows the shape of the octagonal copper roof to make it seem as if the plaster had fallen down over time. "I don't think I've ever worked on something where the detail is as exquisite as this," notes Bryan, who complemented Litchfield's pitch-perfect design with beautiful accents such as an antique painting easel.

Litchfield also brought his design-narrative approach to the garage addition. "I love for every project to have a storyline, so for the garage, I came up with the concept that it could have been





Peaceful Retreat

opposite Although recently planted, Howard designed the gardens to look well established. *above* For the potting shed, architect William B. Litchfield drew inspiration from Bunny Mellon's whimsical greenhouse at Oak Spring Farm in Virginia. Vintage lumber lines the interior walls while exterior lattice screens allow for vines to frame this charming spot. Flowers by Holly Bryan.

the old stable where they kept horses at one time," he explains. Stable doors on either side, with the center door opening to the backyard, now provide extra space for food, tables and even a dance floor when the couple hosts larger groups of guests.

And with the gardens thoughtfully designed to "look good in every season," says Howard, entertaining in the backyard can be a year-round affair. As winter approaches, fragrant daphne will bring the gardens to life, while viburnum and hydrangea are set to bloom in the springtime.

"It all came together like a symphony," says Litchfield, reflecting on the home's three-year transformation. "I'm thrilled they ended up seeing the potential in their home and even more so that they put together a great team to show them what could be."

Bryan agrees. "They use every inch of the home now," she says. "They're able to truly love a place that they almost thought about selling. I'm so glad they gave it a second chance." *See Resources, Page 95.*



Humble Beginning

opposite New gilt cornices in the master bedroom offer a regal touch. *above and right* For the guest bedroom, Bryan reused curtains that once hung in the family room and commissioned cornices with gilded detailing to match the newly painted poster bed. *below* A custom stripe wallpaper by Cole & Son in the stair landing extends to the foyer, making for a classic entrance to this historical home.



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