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Art MATTERS

An Atlanta couple's exceptional collection of paintings and pottery inspires the interiors of their elegant townhouse

INTERIOR DESIGN BY *Beth Webb*
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Between a pair of Circa Lighting sconces, Haidee Becker's painting inspired the color palette for the living room of a new Atlanta townhouse. The interiors use Benjamin Moore's Glacier White, Castle Gate and White Dove.

In the living room a Christian Liaigre sofa is upholstered in Cowtan and Tout fabric. Tom Robinson tables are topped with his lamps. The armchairs are from Bernhardt and the rug is Patterson Flynn Martin. The chairs use fabric from Holland & Sherry and the draperies are Rogers & Goffigon.

Opposite: The dining room features a Peter Carlson table, Donghia chandelier, and Holland & Sherry draperies. This page: Painted doors from France, a 1960s burl-wood Italian desk, and an antique chair co-exist in an office off the garden room.

Opposite page: In the garden room, a loveseat from the homeowners' previous residence was reupholstered in fabric by Pierre Frey to coordinate with the painting by Marie Najera. This page: Cushions on a favorite chair were re-covered in fabric by Jim Thompson. The table is by Skylar Morgan and the rug is from Patterson Flynn Martin.

Curtains in a linen/cotton fabric from C&C Milano separate the master bedroom from a private sitting room. The custom headboard is upholstered in a Holland & Sherry fabric, and the rug is by Patterson Flynn Martin.

"MY FAVORITE CLIENTS are the ones who know what they want," says Atlanta-based interior designer Beth Webb, "the ones who have a great aesthetic of their own."

It's no surprise, then, that Webb thoroughly enjoyed designing the interiors of this new spacious Buckhead townhouse for a pair of friends-turned-clients who wanted favorite artworks in their collection to drive the design of every room in the home.

"She has an absolutely amazing eye," Webb says of the wife, whom she met through mutual friends on a trip to the South of France several years ago. Like Webb herself, her client—an artist currently working mostly in pastels—is an art historian, and has been affiliated with some of the East Coast's top galleries and museums. The husband, who retired as a CEO in the restaurant industry, has been an art lover for many years. Together for two decades, the couple has curated an impressive and varied array of pieces that include American outsider art and pottery, French lithographs, British paintings, and notable examples of German expressionism. Even before they began their collaboration with Webb, the couple had decided which pieces from their collection would go where in the house.

"In every meeting about every single room," the designer recalls, "[the wife] showed me a painting or sculpture and said, 'This is the piece I want to focus on.' That really dictated the layout and the palette."

The home's interior design was further shaped by the owners' desire to incorporate furniture from their previous residences in Georgia and North Carolina—items ranging from patinated antiques to sleek mid-century Modern furnishings and accessories. And while such disparate pieces might have turned into a hodgepodge in lesser hands, Webb was able to make the rooms succeed not only individually, but also as a cohesive whole.

"I'm sort of a fanatic about flow," she says, "so I looked at everything and asked, 'OK, how do we make this all work together? How do we take this particular thing and put it into this new reality?'"

It certainly helped that the "new reality" was an exceptional architectural statement, too. Designed by Atlanta architect Peter Block in the French Hôtel Particulier style, the four-story home features an iron-railed spiral staircase, elegant interior and exterior archways and, in many of the rooms, floor-to-ceiling windows that overlook the neighborhood's shared garden. It helped, as well, that Webb and her client (who had never before used a professional interior designer) were able to work as true, collaborative partners. "I like to tell people that she was as much the designer on this house as I was," says Webb. "She would come to me with wool samples for the rug, and we'd play with the color palette. I would go to visit her and she'd be online and would show me things and ask, "What about this? What about that?' That was the best part of the project for me," Webb says, "the camaraderie that came from doing something in tandem and not just *for* a client."

Their shared vision resulted in a home that is not only arresting in a design sense, but also decidedly and uncompromisingly comfortable—not only for the couple and for their two rat terriers, who are active in every room of the house and on every piece of furniture, but also for large gatherings of guests.

"We like to nestle at home by ourselves," says the wife, "but we also really enjoy having friends over. This house gives us places to do all of that. Beth helped us create a welcoming, bright, and cheery atmosphere for people to visit, and Peter Block designed the rooms to be large and open, which makes for great get-togethers."

In addition to a series of cozy and convivial spaces, the house also encompasses the wife's art studio and a set of gallery-style storage bins for collected works not currently on display. Keeping a large inventory of beloved pieces at hand allows the couple to swap objects out or move paintings around at will, a practice Webb heartily encourages. "If you live with art and you don't move it, you don't see it," Webb says. "It just becomes something you walk past. That's why I like to rotate collections: If you move a certain piece to a different place, it takes on a different life."

Although each room was inspired by a very specific artwork, Webb emphasizes, those paintings and prints will not limit the couple's future design options in the slightest. "Anything new that they swap in will work beautifully," she says, "because their collection really is *that* good." ■

Interior designer Beth Webb pauses at the starcase of the Atlanta home. "I don't do living rooms that are used just on Christmas and Thanksgiving," she says.