

# In Living Color

A designer revitalizes a vintage Charlotte abode boasting special ties to the city's most iconic museum.

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Interior Design: Jolee Fennebresque, Fennebresque Interiors  
Home Builder: John Bourgeois, Bourgeois McGinn Builders







In the breakfast room, a Villa & House console partners with Darnell & Company-sourced lamps and a Charles Stewart ottoman upholstered in Brunschwig & Fils' Bellary cotton. Schumacher's Malaga wallpaper provides the backdrop for a Hego collage mounted by Campania Fine Moulding.

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s an original driving force behind The Mint Museum, North Carolina's first art museum, the late Mary Myers Dwelle would likely be tickled to know that the family inhabiting

her former Charlotte abode is carrying on her artistic interests. "The homeowners are a super dynamic couple, very involved in their community and inspired by art and culture," shares their designer, Jolee Fennebresque. So passionate, in fact, is her clients' interest in collecting that Fennebresque shelved her usual creative approach—to start with the rugs—and instead let their artworks serve as the springboard for eclectic, vivacious rooms.

Fortunately, the dwelling, found in the city's historic Eastover neighborhood, had been renovated a few years before by revered residential designer Frank Smith, a fact that allowed Fennebresque to focus her efforts on the more decorative aspects of the home. Still, the family's arrival of a third child during the project required revising course, as it meant the owners suddenly needed another bedroom. To create more space, they called upon general contractor John Bourgeois, a longtime family friend, to build a garage and guest suite drawn by Smith. Now, a generous retreat designed in keeping with the main residence, both inside and out, awaits visiting grandparents. "This property is classic Eastover architecture," explains Bourgeois, pointing to the whitewashed brick façade and shuttered sash windows. "By keeping the existing details, you can really see the evolution of the house over the years."

"It's a very traditional layout," Fennebresque adds. "When you walk in the front door, the living room is to the left and the dining room is to right, with the kitchen and family room all the way to the back." But that's where the commonness stops. "Each room evolved from the art," she reveals. "The clients would show me new pieces they'd found, then we added furnishings to complement and highlight their eclectic tastes." For the living room, composed with assistance from designer Kate Duffy, Fennebresque placed a bright, green painting by Lithuanian-based artist Lina Lago above the fireplace, countered by an emerald-

hued sofa. "We didn't want to match the painting, but we needed that level of saturation; the nailhead trim adds strength, as well," she notes. Bringing in blue lounge chairs with deep bouillon fringe, sculptural side chairs, and multicolored pillows and drapery fabrics assembled the space in a refreshingly unconventional way. "We wanted to mix things up," Fennebresque adds. A perfect case in point? The pairing of Hepplewhite-style side chairs with an acrylic games table—for a surprisingly *sympatico* result. "The forms of the chairs are familiar, but we pushed them a little with the red geometric upholstery," the designer says. "The Southern homes of today are about having elements of traditional design but making them fresh and fun."

Fennebresque approached the coral-hued dining room in a similar fashion. "The artwork set the palette, then we found the rug, and the rest fell into place," she shares. A commissioned piece by Sally King Benedict depicts the couple's children, for example. And rather than put the striking wallpaper where it might be expected, Fennebresque took it to the ceiling, where it balances the patterns of the rug and armchairs. Still, reception rooms weren't the only spaces to take their cues from the artwork. The greens and blues of the kitchen and family room respond directly to an azure landscape by Mary Rountree Moore, while the breakfast room gets a caffeine boost from a collage of bright yellow tea bags composed by Australian artist Hego, a friend of the couple's, plus a target painting by Florida talent Stephanie Henderson.

Meanwhile, a few existing wallcoverings already felt perfect for the house, so Fennebresque and her clients agreed to keep them. Take, for instance, the primary bathroom's Chinoiserie wallpaper in a pale seafoam shade simply too pretty to alter. "Why not retain the charm that's there?" posits Fennebresque, who emphasized the hue in the adjoining bedroom. "Why not make it last?"

Much like the vibrant family that now calls it home, "This is a warm and happy house, where every space is joyful," says Fennebresque, summing: "I find it inspiring to draw upon classic Southern traditions but have a little more fun with art, color and pattern." And beginning with the art, she believes, would have left Mary Myers Dwelle just as delighted. ■



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Pillows of Clarence House's Kasbah textile accent a Bunny Williams Home sofa in the living room. Above is a framed tapestry from Blowing Rock Antiques. Lee Industries swivel chairs, an Interlude Home coffee table and a Currey & Company ceiling fixture—all from A. Hoke Ltd.—gather atop the Moattar rug.





**Right:** Scalamandré's Tortoiseshell wallcovering, brass pulls from Bird Decorative Hardware & Bath and a coordinating Brizo Artesso faucet outfit the bar. The Oushak runner is from Charlotte Rug Gallery.

**Opposite:** Maxwell Fabrics velvet panels flank a Sally King Benedict painting against Schumacher sisal walls in the dining room. Hickory Chair side chairs wear Clarence House's Avery textile; Charles Stewart skirted seating dons Quadrille's Fairie Enchantee Toile.





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Charles Stewart counter stools covered with Duralee vinyl in Shamrock line the kitchen island below a Visual Comfort pendant. The sofa and club chair in the adjoining family room are by the same brand. A Palecek rattan klismos chair mingles with the faux-shagreen coffee table by Lillian August.





**Right:** The primary bathroom's Cole & Son Hummingbirds wallpaper was retained from a previous iteration of the home's design. Existing marble tile floors and a streamlined soaking tub add a modernist verve.

**Opposite:** Schumacher for Matouk linens dress the guest house bed as Celerie Kemble's Parasol table lamp for Arteriors rests beside it. Red Egg's rattan Indochine Horseshoe armchair sits beneath a Manuel Vicario seascape.

