

Guiding Light

Brightened interiors and sound updates to a soulful North Carolina villa take counsel from its original architect.

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Interior Design: Lisa Sherry, Lisa Sherry Interieurs Home Builder: Cam Hill, Cam Hill



Dark wood doors and walls of Benjamin Moore's China White paint combine to set a graphic tone in the entryway of this North Carolina home by Lisa Sherry. The designer offset the classic form of architect Bobby McAlpine's original groin-vaulted ceiling with an edited composition of Mr. Brown London's marble-and-shagreen Ravenna console and Made Goods' matte-black ceramic Leroy lamp.

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isa Sherry has a thing for juxtapositions. “I run toward them, not away from them,” says the designer. So, when a pair of clients she’d worked with previously reached out for her opinion on whether or not they could create a

modern home out of a very traditional, Tuscan-inspired North Carolina manse that had already won their hearts, Sherry jumped at the challenge. As soon as she saw the residence, she recognized an added layer of complexity: It was the work of architect Bobby McAlpine.

“The home has a sense of history and connectedness, and that’s a McAlpine signature,” says Sherry, who felt strongly about honoring the architect’s original concepts. Though its bones remained timeless, design preferences had shifted in the approximately 15 years since the residence was completed. To that end, Sherry saw her role not as a revisionist, but as the steward of a design evolution. Her vision? To enhance the interior details using her go-to pale neutral palette—which perfectly appealed to her clients’ taste for the light and bright. Equally as important to the owners as modernizing their home’s once-dark interiors were adding bedrooms for their three teenage children and creating a new primary suite. Thus, the couple assembled a team that included two residential designers they already had personal relationships with: Atlantan Wendy Graham, who spearheaded the overall design vision, and Katie Irons Dyer, who took on a more hands-on role on site. “I was initially intimidated by the idea of working on a McAlpine house,” Graham admits, “but I knew and admired his work well enough to know the house would somehow, and clearly, show us the way.”

Referencing McAlpine’s original plans for the house (“a beautiful manuscript” with dozens of hand-drawn pages, notes Graham), she immediately noticed the home’s strong axes, which “gracefully guide you into the courtyard, then into the house and then subtly usher you through the perfectly proportioned spaces.” Each axis ends with intention, leading to a view or architectural feature—a fireplace, folly or arched doorway. Hence, she and Dyer designed the primary suite addition similarly, as an axial extension of the home. “We utilized the same language as McAlpine’s design—proportions

and sizes of spaces, windows, doors and other construction details—without necessarily replicating them exactly,” Dyer explains.

Staying within existing walls, the pair also converted what were formerly lower-level guest quarters into the requested teen bedrooms. For these and other updates, general contractor Cam Hill’s extensive connections ensured the group was able to work with many of the same artisans who had contributed to the home’s original iteration. Hill also knew precisely who to call for hand-slathered brick that would match the original exterior treatment. Furthermore, his attention to detail ensured the revision retained the structure’s existing sense of symmetry and balance. Namely, during framing, when the team discovered that one of the main interior openings in the addition was off-center by 3 inches, Hill supported correcting it—despite the delay it would cause to the project’s tight schedule. “We all discussed the domino effect of the loss of symmetry in this house and he absolutely appreciated the value of making the change,” explains Graham, commenting that the new architecture pares down the home’s original classical system. The result, she believes, is not so much a modern addition as an organic extension.

“You cannot tell that anything has been added to the house,” chimes Sherry, whose layered, yet “relentlessly edited” approach to furnishings manifested as warm and whimsical yet minimalist interiors. And though a neutral and white palette could have read as cold within such restrained rooms, Sherry kept things from feeling austere by complementing with contrasting materials and unexpected textures. Her telltale love of juxtapositions is well on display in the primary bathroom, where Lucite and marble mix with plaster and shagreen; in the living room, whitewashed walls and moldings defer to window mullions that went black for a modern twist. The designer’s graphic palette then extends outdoors, where her selections of angular armchairs and a streamlined dining set form a laid-back living area against the palazzo-like backdrop of the lush courtyard and patios surrounding the pool.

While paying homage to McAlpine may have seemed a challenge at first, his work ultimately made the new interiors more harmonious, allowing for a natural give and take between modern and traditional disciplines. Light and dark, yin and yang, original—and renewed. **L**



Sherry's airy palette for the living room includes dark window mullions painted with Benjamin Moore's Black Tar—a fitting complement for the existing stained pecky cypress ceiling. A custom sofa covered in Schumacher wool curves about Phillips Collection's Grotto coffee table as sculptural Arteriors, Made Goods and Studio A lamps confirm the room's contemporary shift.

“Both homeowners are **modern at heart**. So, the question became, ‘Could history and modernity be **held in balance?**’”

—LISA SHERRY



Right: Though Sherry retained the fundamentals of McAlpine's original design for the kitchen, she significantly brightened the space by way of glossy Benjamin Moore paint on the cabinetry and substantial MetroQuartz countertops accented with Schaub and Company's acrylic-and-polished nickel Lumiere hardware for extra gleam. A vintage Turkish rug from Orientalist Home softens the room's high-shine surfaces.

Opposite: A luminous Laura Kirar-designed pendant presides over Mr. Brown London's gesso-topped Atlantis dining table in the dining room, where a sixsome of custom chairs wears Schumacher faux leather. Abstract Paule Marrot prints by Natural Curiosities frame a doorway crowned by a traditional Georgian pediment, collectively forming the room's focal point.





Above: Arteriors' crown-like Analise chandelier enhances the glimmer of a Phillip Jeffries wallcovering—Vinyl Gateway in Shoji silver—in the spa-like primary bathroom. A BainUltra soaking tub and floor-mounted Graff tub filler, both from Wilkinson Supply Co., compose an indulgent spot to unwind. A bespoke stool of rose-hued Kirkby Design faux leather, sourced through Romo, provides a perch for a glass of wine.

Opposite: Headlined by residential designers Wendy Graham and Katie Irons Dyer, the primary bedroom addition was devised as a soothing escape. "The addition is truly seamless and feels inherent to the home, as if it had always been there," says Sherry, who layered the retreat with sumptuous textiles including Virtuoso sateen Peacock Alley linens and a wool-blend Jaipur rug—both beneath Oly's Sputnik-like cast-resin Fanad chandelier. The French doors are by Dallas Millwork.