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MARCH 2020
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COLLECTORS' CALL

An Atlanta couple with a passion for antiques downsizes to a townhouse, and enlists their longtime designer, Bill Murphy, to craft rooms that will stand the test of time

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Modern Move

The family room, one of the home's more contemporary-minded spaces, features an abstract painting by Atlanta artist Sidney Guberman and an acrylic coffee table set with a Han dynasty glazed funerary urn and an early Ming dynasty blue-and-white jar.









Lasting Impressions

In the foyer, a portion of the homeowners' treasured collections greet guests, like the antique dog paintings and landscapes that line the stairwell. *left* A grouping of Song dynasty funerary urns rests atop an antique William and Mary-style cabinet. The stair runner and all of the home's area rugs are by Designer Carpets.

IF THE MARK OF GREAT DECORATING is that it can survive both the vagaries of time and a move between residences, consider Atlanta- and Naples, Florida-based designer Bill Murphy's work for two longtime clients a resounding success. Referred to the couple years ago by none other than the late Atlanta design legend T. Gordon Little, Murphy, along with his late design partner, James Essary, decorated the couple's previous home so adroitly that when the clients downsized to a Peachtree Road townhouse two years ago—and moved their home's contents with them—the furnishings needed very little in the way of updating.

"Decorating should be timeless. It's not faddish," notes Murphy, who keeps Essary's spirit alive in both his work and his conversation. "It's like buying investment clothing. Buy great pieces of upholstery that you'll only need to re-cover occasionally."

Silver Linings

Greige-colored silk curtains from James Hare, a mirrored chimney breast, and walls, ceiling and trim painted Benjamin Moore's Revere Pewter all exude cool elegance in this living room.





BESTIARY



Patinaed Pieces

above A Han dynasty pagoda tower stands sentry against the dining room wall. *right* Murphy clad the dining room walls with Cole & Son's monochromatic Chippendale China wallpaper. The dining room chairs, purchased at Travis & Company, were also used in the clients' previous home.

Tasked with giving the couple's new residence "the look of a New York townhouse," Murphy did so by choosing sophisticated, subtle paint colors in shades of greige, taupe and putty, which were used not only on walls but ceilings and trim work too. "When a room is all one color, it opens it up and makes it look larger" explains Murphy, who treated walls to a paint color's full strength and ceiling and trim to half strength. Also in the spirit of Manhattan, baseboards were given coats of snappy black paint. Altogether, the colors offer the eyes a soothing journey from room to room, but they also play another important role: as a neutral backdrop to showcase the homeowners' many collections, including antique dog paintings and, more notably, Asian antiquities, which populate most rooms in the home.







Gathering Space

The homeowners wanted a kitchen that balances function with classic style. The result: a clean sweep of Carrara marble cut into herringbone tiles for the backsplash and applied as simple slabs on the countertops with a waterfall edge wrapping the island. Circa Lighting's English-inspired fixture hangs overhead.

Blue-and-white porcelains from the early Ming to Yuan dynasties are congregated in the dining and breakfast rooms, while in the living room, centuries-old terracotta horses and earthenware fill the floor-to-ceiling shelves. And, even some of the home's interior selections pay homage to the couple's affection for the Chinese style, including a subtle chinoiserie-print wallpaper in the dining room and a pagoda-patterned upholstery and pillow fabric in the family room.

It is Murphy's expertise at channeling his clients' diverse interests and possessions into a cohesive, attractive whole that keeps his clients coming back for more. "He knows what we like and has been able to pull the collections and furniture together into a unified piece," says one of the homeowners, who adds that working with Murphy over the years "has been a pure pleasure." For a designer, that just might be the highest compliment of all. *See Resources, Back of Book.*

*Metropolitan
Retreat*

Because the Buckhead townhouse boasts a formal boxwood garden and a manicured terrace, Murphy avoided using the color green indoors to keep from competing with the leafy views outside.

BETWEEN THE DISPLAYS OF THE INTERIOR'S ASIAN ANTIQUITIES AND THE COURTYARD'S LUSHNESS, THE TOWNHOUSE OFFERS A ZEN ESCAPE FROM THE CITY.







“THE FEATHERS MAKE THE BIRD.” —BILL MURPHY

Worldly Influences

from top William T. Smith and Associates oversaw the landscaping. The chrome sculpture is another piece by Atlanta artist Sidney Guberman. *opposite* The breakfast room features a blend of styles and ages, including antique furniture and abstract art that is attributed to the late Atlanta decorator, Jay Young. Edgar-Reeves reworked a pair of wooden figures into lamps atop the sideboard.





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LESS. IT’S NOT FADDISH. IT’S LIKE
BUYING INVESTMENT CLOTHING.”
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***Plush
Quarters***

above A handsome four-poster bed from Grizzel & Mann offers refuge in the master bedroom. Pale fabrics underscore that tranquility, particularly the icy blue woven damask fabric from Anna French, used for the draperies and the bed’s throw. Benjamin Moore’s Overcast paint envelops the room.



*Artfully
Accessorized*

clockwise from top
Every space in the home boasts at least one Asian antiquity, even the bathroom. As Murphy likes to say, "The feathers make the bird." In the guest bedroom, he selected a lively floral-patterned fabric by Scalamandré and scattered blue-and-white porcelain throughout. The collectibles rest on stands and read like sculptures in the other guest bedroom and the draperies made from Fabricut's Float Ikat provide a little modern zip to the decor.