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SUMMER 2015



THE EVOLUTION
OF TRADITIONAL
Style

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When it was time to update this sprawling Georgian-style home in Easley, interior designer Cynthia Masters didn't have to get to know the homeowners -- she had already known them for 20 years. "I was at her kids' weddings," she says. "I know them well."

Masters, president of Panageries in Greenville, had originally worked with the family when the N. Jackson Thacker & Associates-designed home was built in 1995. A refresh 20 years later created the perfect opportunity to explore how traditional style can easily be updated with a fresh look and how, in the right hands, traditional never means boring.

"I like the phrase 'new traditional,'" Masters says. "Taking traditional and freshening it up. It's not stodgy. It's not your grandma's traditional!"

For the past couple of years, Masters has worked with the homeowners -- now empty-nesters with three grown children -- to revamp the main living area of the home. The four bedrooms upstairs have received some updates in anticipation of visits from future grandchildren (the first is on the way).

The massive front door -- flanked by sidelights -- and an overdoor of German glass are typical of Thacker's classical design and offer a hint at the home's traditional style. "The house is well-built and well-designed, with great bones," Masters says. "It's easy to make cosmetic updates. It has great light."





In the dining room, Masters was able to keep the homeowners' table, chairs, French armoire and oushak rug. "All of the major pieces are timeless, so we didn't have to change those at all," Masters explains. "We just changed what goes around it."

So while the last iteration of the dining room had Chinese red walls, red and gold chairs and ornate draperies, the update features soft colors, simple panels and houndstooth fabric on the chairs. "They wanted to keep it light, fresh and airy," Masters says.







The living room continues the airy feel, with soft blues and greens accented with sparkle from mercury glass. The painting over the mantel is by local artist Marquin Campbell. Masters asked her to create the feel of looking out of a window in a 1970s Southern town on a rainy day. “She’s wonderful at interpreting what we wanted,” Masters says.

The facing wall features another local artist, Joseph Bradley, who created three tall, abstract works that the homeowner says represent her children in a subtle way.







The solid pine bed and French armoire still anchor the master suite, so Masters simply added new bedding and new upholstery for the bench, chair and ottoman. She added a bit of modernity with new metallic bedside tables and a screen. “They are a little more funky, not quite as traditional,” she says.

The master bathroom still had quality features from 1995, including cabinets, plumbing and tile. The update simply required new faucets and hardware for the cabinets and updated floral wallpaper.





The kitchen is the most dramatically updated room. Formerly a darker blue with pickled, honey-colored cabinets, fluorescent lighting and jewel-toned accents, the room is now light and bright, with ivory cabinets, a watery green island and collections of blue and white plates. The large, round pendants bring together bronze and brass and nod to the “bubble” chandelier in the dining room. The golden oak floor, kitchen table and dark granite countertops remain unchanged.





A popular hangout spot, the sunroom has large windows and a skylight, and only needed fresh upholstery and pillows to create a neutral background for updated accessories such as botanicals on the walls, a new porcelain garden seat in watery blue, and a cheetah-print ottoman that worked with the old room and still works with the new.

While Masters and the homeowners still have a few plans for the home’s outdoor areas and the basement, which is morphing into a television room and rec room, she and the homeowners agree that following a few key rules will allow them to keep a fresh, traditional look for years to come.

“It’s been fun to go through each iteration with them,” Masters says. “Williamsburg pinks and blues in the 80s, the jewel tones and English Country of the 90s and now this, which is light and bright and timeless. And by using traditional key pieces, she can easily pull in transitional or contemporary pieces on down the line.”



TOP TIPS FOR UPDATING TRADITIONAL

Style

Cynthia Masters has created interiors of every style, but is known for her fresh take on traditional, as seen here. “I love traditional design because it’s so timeless,” she said. “What’s contemporary today isn’t going to be contemporary tomorrow.”

She offers a few tips on updating your home with ideas that never go out of style.

Buy once and buy well.

Masters says investing in quality major pieces pays off in the long run. These can be updated with more inexpensive pillows, fabrics and accents.

I like to mix my metals.

The rules have changed, she said, and she often brings together gold, bronze and silver to create the perfect mix.

I don’t leave a ceiling untouched.

Use the ceiling as your fifth wall, using color or even wallpaper to add contrast and interest.

If you’ve got a collection, put it all in one spot - it makes more of an impact.

And don’t worry about keeping fine things separate from inexpensive things. “One will elevate the others.”

Sometimes you find a great piece of art and work around it, but other times, you need art that will finish the room.

Cynthia often enlists local artists to create pieces based on the size, color scheme and mood she is looking for.

Colors need to flow, but you don’t need to be matchy-matchy.

Have three to five colors that you trade off and mix from room to room, so every room isn’t the same, but the home is cohesive.

Beware eclectic.

Sometimes that means hodgepodge. Eclectic is fine if it’s a mix of styles and well thought-out.

Understand the rules of interior design.

You are taught the rules for a reason. Then learn where you can break them.