
A large, dense bouquet of white roses is arranged in a white, classical-style urn. The urn has a fluted body, a decorative handle on the right side, and a pedestal base. The roses are in various stages of bloom, with some showing deep white and others a slight yellow. The background is softly blurred, showing hints of a room with a lamp and other decor.

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Designer Susan Jamieson clarifies the classic features of her



BY CANDACE ORD MANROE PHOTOGRAPHY BY GORDON BEALL PRODUCED BY LISA MOWRY

Susan Jamieson reupholstered her grandmother's Empire sofa for the living room. The coffee table and lamp echo its curves, which are offset by the straight lines of the puddling draperies. An urn brimming with white roses reinforces the neoclassical architecture.

Greek Revival-style home with a serene yet saucy spirit.



Designed by Susan, the faux-snakeskin-framed mirror above the original hand-carved marble mantel brings textural interest to the monochromatic living room. Right: Susan added metallic glint with the table, the custom fireplace screen, and the silver-tone nailhead trim on a pair of suede ottans.



Beneath the dated moiré wallpaper, the navy blue wall-to-wall carpet,


and the loudly contrasting peach paint, Susan Jamieson recognized a 1924 classic. Not for a minute did she doubt that she could mute the visual cacophony lingering from the '80s to produce the kind of serene spaces she and her husband, John, could proudly call home. "As soon as we walked into the foyer, we knew this was the one. It had all the right features—Greek Revival-style architectural details with the kind of rich, well-crafted character that you can best find in an older home," Susan says.

John, a software consultant, was happy to defer to his wife's judgment. As an ASID member who studied design in Florence and holds a BFA in art history and a masters degree in interior design, Susan was the better qualified to make the call. And as she saw it, all the house needed was a good molting to bring out its natural beauty, which she would then enhance with her own special feathering—an impeccable selection of fine antiques and art plus new and custom furnishings and a grand finale of her own signature window treatments.

"I couldn't wait for the work crews to arrive," she recalls. "The day of the closing, I was removing the moiré wallpaper and ripping up the carpet." Ridding the kitchen of its yellow laminate and linoleum came later.

Beginning in the living room, she introduced the creamy colors that weave all the spaces together. "Although I enjoy working with color, this house called for a neutral palette that radiates a sense of pure and classic elegance," Susan notes. "The soft tones of cream, white, and gray make the living room's European hand-carved marble mantel a dramatic focal point."

Designed with four formal rooms that form a perfect square, the architecture required some care with color. "Each of these rooms feeds into the next through architecturally detailed openings, so it was very important to make the design flow from one room to the other." Adhering to her basic palette of pale neutrals prevented jarring disconnections, but Susan still managed to individualize rooms by taking each one a step up or down in tone from its adjacent spaces. "I changed the wall



The library celebrates air and earth with fresh white paint, chocolate-hued barrel chairs—re-covered family pieces—and a brick-red ottoman.

Right: In the dining room, Susan skirted the table for softness. The old sideboard recalls Chippendale.



hue slightly between rooms. While the living room has a calm, crisp look, the trellis-patterned wallpaper and the gold of the draperies make the dining room more dramatic," she says.

With the backgrounds beautifully simplified, Susan began to choose furnishings, starting in the living room with the Empire sofa she had inherited from her grandmother. "I changed its green velvet to a white quilted pattern that creates a dramatic contrast to the sofa's wood frame." The dark-light contrast is a theme throughout the house, with the dark wood floors playing off the pale walls.

Susan further dressed the living room with comfortable new chairs that echo the curves of the sofa and fireplace. "Then, I juxtaposed those curves with the straight, linear forms of the draperies, fire screen, and mirror"—all her own designs. "The full puddle draperies help to soften and heighten the room and enhance the natural beauty of the windows," she says. Plus, say her friends, they are as elegant as ball gowns. Interlined with bump (soft, thick cotton), the draperies feature two fabrics. The bottom section repeats the quilted pattern of the sofa, while the top sports a tone-on-tone vertical stripe. A faux-snakeskin mirror frame she designed to top the mantel steps up the room's textural intrigue. "A neutral room runs the risk of feeling cold and monotonous unless patterns and textures are a part of its decorating," Susan warns.

Personal pieces are also important in the home's design. "The gold-and-crystal chandelier in the center of the dining room



A lacquered finish gives a burnished glow to the master bedroom's end tables. The patterned border of the silk window shades recalls decorative painting on the crown moldings (not shown).

Opposite, clockwise from top left: Susan transformed the back lawn from old decking to a stone-paved courtyard complete with a love knot planted in dwarf mondo grass; new landscaping and paint enhanced the curb appeal of the 1924 Greek Revival-style house; a chandelier suspended from a tree branch creates a room-like ambience for the outdoor dining area, where Susan spends quiet time as well as entertains; the fish sculpture is from a fish-themed citywide art project Susan spearheaded as a fundraiser, generating more than \$300,000 for Richmond charities.

is the one used in the tent set up for our wedding," Susan says by way of illustration. The dining room's metal artwork is by contemporary artist Bill Fisher, whose work the couple began collecting upon their marriage. "Our wedding gift to each other was a large Bill Fisher painting, which was featured in an exhibition at the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, Virginia." To help integrate Fisher's metal art into the dining room, Susan mounted an old cast-iron floor register with intricate grillwork onto the wall between the windows—a decision that stamps the room with a one-of-a-kind personality.

Although the house includes a family room (the fourth room that forms the square), the couple's favorite hangout is the library. "We sit here every morning and evening to read and talk," Susan shares. When they moved in, the floor-to-ceiling bookcases were painted navy blue and were underscored by green wall-to-wall carpet. "It was claustrophobic," she says of the small space. And, with a 14-foot ceiling, the visual weight was uncomfortably vertical. "I painted the bookcases white to open up the room, then

painted the ceiling a warm caramel color to visually bring it down." For seating, she re-covered old barrel-back chairs passed down from John's parents—chairs she admires for "their retro look." A new table makes the room multifunctional.

Susan's design goal for the master bedroom was "soft and luxurious, warm and crisp." Light colors open up the room, and a tone-on-tone vertical-stripe wallpaper makes it appear taller. A custom-painted plaster border of laurel wreaths and acanthus leaves also draws the eye up, while adding femininity. But that delicate touch pales in comparison to the bed's dust skirt—a crinoline-supported concoction with the fullness and flounce of a ballerina's tutu. Susan designed a quilted headboard flanked with finials to "make the bed important and luxurious." Silk and chenille pillows, a chocolate cashmere blanket, and an ever-changing array of matelassé and piqué coverlets and linens create deep comfort—a feeling that permeates all of this vintage house, freshly plumed after an overdue molting. ■

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