

ATLANTA HOMES & LIFESTYLES

all the
BEST

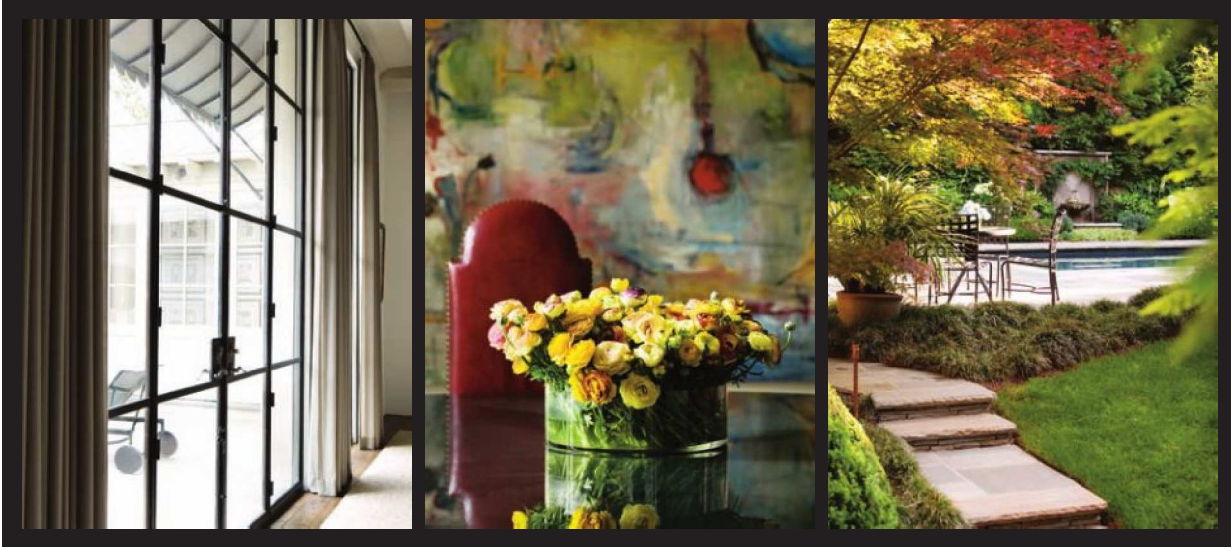
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classic & chic
award-winning ideas
from local pros



One might say the designers in this month's pages are in a league of their own. In fact, they're the sort you can trust to deliver the exact design of your dreams—even when left entirely to their own devices. In a stately example in Buckhead, architect *D. STANLEY DIXON* teamed up with interior designer *BETTY BURGESS* to create an exceptional home for a Braves pitcher and his wife. Derek Lowe deferred to Dixon's expertise for the architectural elements while his wife, Carolyn, gave Burgess carte blanche for the home's interior design. The results, not surprisingly, are as beautiful as they are livable. For their part, residential designers *FREDERICK SPITZMILLER* and *ROBERT NORRIS* learned early on that they could place that same level of trust in each other. As they reach a quarter-century milestone in their business partnership, we reflect on their journey, during which they've amassed countless prestigious awards and their houses have become modern-day classics. With that same design confidence—and the homeowner's blessing—garden designer *ALEX SMITH* transformed a Dunwoody backyard into an intricate haven thick with plants both classic and exotic. Over time, this private plot has reached masterful proportions. It is that same autonomy that allows all five of these talents to usher Atlanta into a more brilliant design future.

PERFECT pitch

*ARCHITECT
D. STANLEY DIXON
AND DESIGNER
BETTY BURGESS
TEAM UP TO
CREATE A WINNING
DESIGN FOR
ATLANTA BRAVE
DEREK LOWE*

WRITTEN BY HEATHER J. PAPER
PHOTOGRAPHED BY ERICA GEORGE DINES
PRODUCED BY CLINTON SMITH





opposite The Lowe residence embodies Betty Burgess' signature style: It has classical anchors with unexpected surprises thrown in. *this page* The formal end of the living room features a pair of 19th-century bergère chairs and a Charles Wiggins oil painting over the mantel. But subtle touches—like the chairs' ticking stripe upholstery—keep the space from becoming too serious or stuffy.



SIMPLE & SYMMETRICAL

In the living room, two furniture groupings are beautifully balanced; one is formal and the other casual, one features a red velvet sofa and the other a natural linen complement. Both sofas are backed by concrete tables, positioned to lead your eye toward the stunning courtyard view beyond the steel window-and-door system that's decked out in wool sheers to softly filter the natural light.







TRADITION WITH A TWIST

opposite Behind a pair of antique doors, Dixon carved out a two-inch sliver of space, just deep enough to accommodate a flat-screen TV. When closed, the doors serve as an over-size work of art that visually balances the fireplace at the other end of the room. But Burgess' favorite thing here is a pair of vintage swivel chairs, with their original leather intact. *left* Layered atop the mirrored back wall of the living room is a pair of convex mirrors, actually fitted with Plexiglas. *below* Dixon thickened a lot of the interior walls so, when you're walking from one room to another, you get a sense of depth and substance. Oval-shaped transoms over the living room doorways provide visually pleasing counterpoints.

SAY "SPEC HOUSE" AND YOU MIGHT THINK "cookie cutter"—a residence that looks like every other house on the street. But architect D. Stanley Dixon took the concept and turned it on its ear, creating something so spectacular it's already been given the prestigious Shutze Award.

"I was hired by [developer] John Mears, who bought the land, to design a custom house to be resold," Dixon explains. "And John gave me free reign to do whatever I wanted."

Those two little words—"free reign"—were music to the architect's ears. And, for his part, Mears knew precisely what he was doing. "I try to create custom homes on a speculative basis, to deliver a perfectly done jewel box for the high-end client," says Mears, president of Rivers Residential. "I've done 10 or 12 projects with Stan. We have such great chemistry; there's always a terrific exchange of thoughts and opinions."

"I designed it as I would want to design a house for myself. It was fun to play out what has really inspired me as an architect—classic, timeless design with a clean aesthetic," says Dixon. "The lot was interesting because it was in an in-town neighborhood full of gorgeous homes that are very eclectic in style. Some are French, some English, some Georgian; there's just a little bit of everything.







EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

opposite The combined design talents of architect and designer perhaps play nowhere better than in the kitchen. "It's one of my favorite rooms in the house—with great scale," Dixon says. The symmetrically designed space is anchored by an island that's illuminated by pendants fashioned from propane tank end caps. Bar stools with easy-to-clean patent leather seats pull up to the island for casual dining. *above* In lieu of more conventional artwork, Burgess opted for a simple piece of sheet metal coated with chalkboard paint. The choice is particularly unexpected—but refreshing—juxtaposed with an 18th-century oak farm table. *left* Dixon's favorite feature in the kitchen is the pantry. "When the pantry doors are closed, it just looks like a wall of tall cabinets," he explains. You punch through that 'cabinetry' and are surprised to see this delightful pantry with a small window in it, so you get a little natural light. It gives you a tremendous amount of storage and takes a lot of the pressure off the kitchen having to have so much enclosed storage."

FOCAL POINT

this page A modern chandelier brings to light Burgess' deft ability to choose fixtures; this one is particularly eye-catching coupled with 19th-century chairs from Belgium, still with their original red leather backs. But the pièce de résistance is an oil painting by Kenson Thompson. "Birds Making Nests Out of Baseballs" incorporates Derek's number—32—as well as baseballs and the string that they're made of. *right* In the powder room, this home's recurring oval motif shows up in the form of a window over the vanity. The simplicity of its form beautifully complements the Clarence House "Flowering Quince" wallpaper.





Instead of designing to a particular style of the street, I was mostly interested in how it related to the street in scale and proportion.

“While maintaining gracious 12-foot ceiling heights on the main level, we kept the roof line simple and lowered the eaves at the second story to keep in scale with the neighborhood. Keeping the form of the house simple but very well-proportioned was key to making it blend. Yet, it has its own personality, character and defining style.”

The strength of this residence lies not only in its simplicity but also in its straightforward approach. “We designed the driveway so it was very axial,” Dixon explains. “As you turn off the street, you’re right on center with the front door. And that axis goes all the way through the house to the swimming pool and the pavilion beyond.”

Playing off that main axis, the layout of the house is symmetrical. “I paid a lot of attention to visual corridors,” says Dixon, “so that when you look down an axis something receives you. That *something* ranges from a wall for art, a framed view of the gardens beyond or an architectural detail such as a fireplace. There aren’t a lot of rooms; they’re just well-proportioned with an easy flow.”

Interior elements, too, were chosen as if the architect were his own client. “The finishes of the house consist of painted boards, plaster and limed beams with a restrained amount of trim. This simplicity is often harder to accomplish because you can’t hide behind trim work and molding; the proportion and scale of each room, combined with the quality of light, becomes the focus. We thickened a lot of walls. The front façade of the house was 12 inches thick so the windows and doors sit deep, giving a lot of shadow and depth. We also thickened a lot of the interior walls so, when you’re walking from one room to another, you get a sense of depth and substance.”



The finished residence drew high praise, not only from the architectural community but also interior designers like Betty Burgess. As it happened, she'd just been retained by Derek Lowe; the Atlanta Braves pitcher and his wife, Carolyn, were searching for a home in their newly-adopted city. "They'd narrowed their search down to two homes when Carolyn brought me on board," Burgess recalls. "And I was rooting for *this* house."

Derek had signed with the Braves in January 2009, and the couple bought the house one month later. But, for Burgess' part, there was a catch: The interior design had to be completed in time for the Lowes to move in by Opening Day in April.

"We did the whole house in two months. I've never worked so hard in my life!" she recalls. What Burgess *did* have going for her, though, was Dixon's impeccable design. Plus, her new client had complete faith in the designer.

"Carolyn saw nothing in the house before they moved in," says Burgess. "In fact, during my first interview with her I asked what colors she liked and she said 'I could tell you but I don't want to influence what you want to do.' But I did discover that she really does like red and that started the wheels turning; I did red and blue accents throughout the main areas."

The Lowes also didn't want the house to feel too contemporary, but that played right into the designer's signature style. "I worked for Dan Carithers until 2004; he taught me the fundamentals of traditional design," Burgess says. "Since going out on my own, I've taken that knowledge and translated it into my own vision. My style would probably still be best described as traditional; it has classical anchors with unexpected surprises thrown in. And art is my passion. I like to mix traditional with modern, and mix media, too."

The entry to this residence is oval-shaped, a clue to a recurring architectural theme throughout; there is, for instance, an oval-





SINGING THE BLUES

this page The paneled study features a limestone fireplace as well as soaring windows; measuring almost 11 feet tall, they virtually flood the room with natural light. Still, it's the darkest room in the house, so Burgess brightened with pops of royal blue—in a pair of 19th-century French armchairs, a 19th-century French desk chair, even a vintage lamp. Serving as a table between the twin armchairs, an antique Louis Vuitton trunk from Interiors Market is one of the Lowes' favorite pieces. *left* Atop the mantel, a variety of antique pharmacy bottles carries out the room's royal blue theme.



CLASSIC BEAUTY

above The view from this home's front door looks through the living room to this pavilion at the far end of the pool. *right* "I love the gravel courtyard in the front; the sound of the crush as you drive across it kind of slows down the pace after you pull off of Peachtree Battle," Dixon says. "We elevated the house up off the ground a little bit so it sits proud. And we reduced the number of doors and windows; we have just a few very well-proportioned [ones] that give it a level of simplicity." *opposite* The house was U-shaped when Dixon originally designed it but the Lowes asked him to add a pool and pavilion. "We kept [them] on the main axis with the house," says the architect, "and actually added walls so that it becomes a complete four-sided courtyard." Architect D. Stanley Dixon (far right) designed this residence "as I would want to design a house for myself. It was fun to play out what has really inspired me as an architect—classic, timeless design with a clean aesthetic," says Dixon.





shaped window in the powder room as well as oval transoms over interior doors. Portiere curtains provide privacy, given the glass front door, and lend softness as you go from the foyer to the living room. “That’s something that Betty and I brainstormed on together,” says Dixon. “When the Lowes bought the house, she and I sat down together and went through some big-concept ideas.”

To the right of the foyer is the paneled study. “It’s the darkest room in the house,” says Burgess, “so whatever I used there had to pop. Once I saw the color of the wood, I knew that ‘pop’ had to be royal blue velvet.” Across the hall, the designer’s deft hand for mixing things up is at once evident; an oh-so-modern chandelier is right at home with much more traditional chairs from Belgium and a French enfilade.

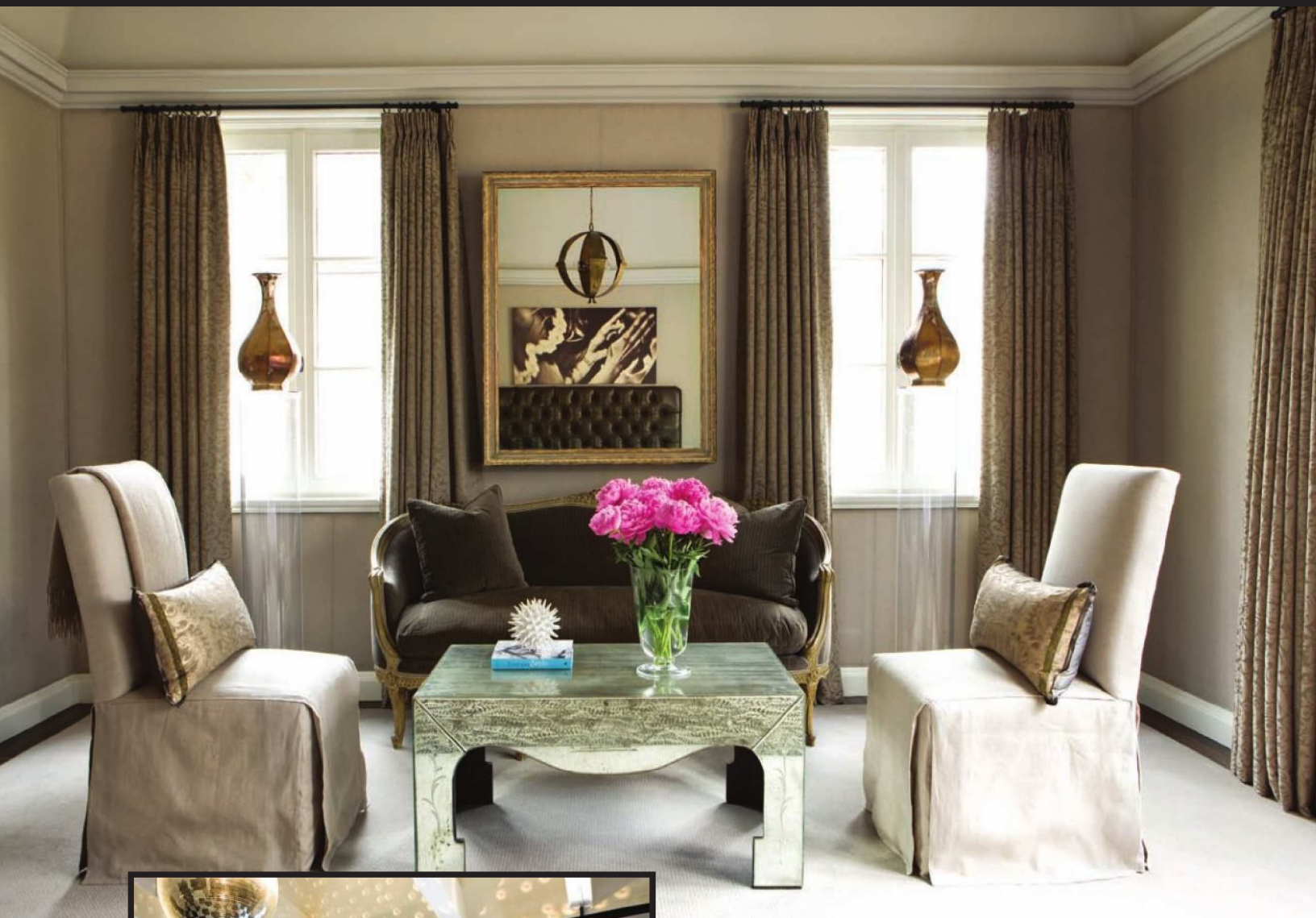
In the living room, two furniture groupings are beautifully balanced; one is formal and the other casual, one is decked out in velvet while the other’s in linen. To take full advantage of the impressive courtyard view, Burgess decided to mirror the room’s entire back wall—three days before the Lowes were set to move in. The last-minute change of plans was well worth it, though; that single decorating decision effectively doubled the drama.

But if there’s one room that perhaps best illustrates the synergy of this architect and designer, it’s the kitchen. Dixon mixed Belgian influences with French while Burgess juxtaposed an 18th-century French farm table with patent leather-upholstered bar stools. Dixon created a “secret” pantry that’s accessed by punching through doors that appear to be tall cabinets. And Burgess provided a surprise of her own, using the end caps of propane tanks to fashion over-the-island lighting.

Make no mistake: These two design pros, at the top of their games, have hit a home run for the Lowes. *SEE RESOURCES, BACK OF BOOK.*







PUTTING IT IN NEUTRAL

opposite Linen-covered walls surround the master bedroom, anchored at one end by a bed featuring a Burgess-designed leather headboard. Intaglio reliefs lend a traditional touch while a faux fur throw multiples the room's glam quotient. Purely personal art stars here, as well. The Lowes' wedding photographer blew up an image of Carolyn touching Derek's face, revealing her husband's name tattooed on her wrist. *above* Opposite the bed, a sitting area features a 19th-century settee flanked by a pair of slipper chairs. But the best-kept secret here is the TV; it's disguised behind a two-way mirror over the settee. *left* Part of the garage has been converted into an entertaining pavilion, complete with vintage metal chairs, Sunbrella outdoor fabric used for draperies, textured non-slip paint on the floor—even a requisite disco ball.