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Drawing on past and present, a new house "feels like an old house" with a fresh take on urban French style.



INTERIOR DESIGN BY MELANIE TURNER ARCHITECTURE BY ROBBIE FUSCH  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERICA GEORGE DINES TEXT BY LINDA E. CLOPTON

Designer Melanie Turner had long wished for “an inheritable house, something that would last forever.”

It would be a city dwelling in an established, upscale Atlanta neighborhood, so the house would need to blend in, look gracious and settled. Turner and her husband, residential builder Stan Benecki, decided on a stone structure for an aura of permanence and an urban French-influenced style for simple elegance. During a trip to Texas, they admired architect Robbie Fusch’s work, particularly his ability to design in stone, and enlisted him to create “a new house that feels like an old house.”

Turner, a native of Wales, explains, “I love houses that look as though they’ve been around for hundreds of years. I always want classical design, things that never go out of style. But I believe this house has personality. It’s glamorous and comfortable. I rely on two formulas: Make it livable and use what you love.” She did both and won the Atlanta Decorative Arts Center’s 2009 Southeast Designer of the Year award for this project.

In creating the house, Turner paid close attention to every design choice—from the nickel mesh for certain kitchen cabinet doors to the quarter-sawn oak floor in a custom stain. She specified wide doorjambes to suggest thick walls, windows extending to the floor and “all the tricks that make you feel like you’re in an old house.”

Functionality played a vital role. “I’m a practical person. Not only do things have to be pretty, they also really have to work. Rooms should be totally, fully lived in.” She wanted a salon for large social gatherings as well as intimate family get-togethers. “So I added wall paneling for warmth and created three seating areas that made the room usable and inviting. I covered the two sofas in a linen-like cotton and the chairs in velvet—all with no pattern for a soft look and a calming effect.”

Large works of contemporary art fit the scale of the house and made the rooms feel personal.



OPENING PAGES: Julian Chichester coffee tables and mirror. Sofas in cotton, chairs in velvet and ottomans in linen, all by Bradley Hughes. Hickory Chair stool by Suzanne Kasler. Oly consoles and chandelier. Thomas Pheasant urns for Baker on custom Bradley Hughes table. Draperies in Schumacher velvet. Custom rug. COVER AND THESE PAGES: Dining chairs by Suzanne Kasler for Hickory Chair in pleather; backs and drapery trim in custom velvet. Draperies in Schumacher velvet. Italian sconces. Hickory Chair sideboard. Art by Todd Murphy. Dennis & Leen chandelier.



“I used no upper cabinets on the window wall to



keep the kitchen light and airy," says the designer.



Bench in Arnitex vinyl and cabinetry, all by Melanie Turner. Hanging lamps by Thomas O'Brien for Visual Comfort. Lee Industries stools in linen. Countertops in Walker Zanger marble. Sub-Zero refrigerators. GE microwave. Kohler sinks. Waterworks faucetry. Lacanche range. Custom hood. Florals throughout by Melanie Turner.



Turner continued the marriage of old and new by combining antiques with custom upholstery. “My interest in antiques developed from my parents’ love of antiquing in Wales. After we moved to America and I was old enough, I spent every weekend going with them to antiques markets.”

In her dining room, Turner alluded to a French ballroom, fitting custom mirrors into carved-wood wall panels and using a parquet pattern underfoot. “It’s a classical room,” she says. “I played off the masculine and feminine, contrasting the dark floors with white walls, drapes and chairs. Then I

added touches of yellow for freshness.”

The color scheme reappeared in her kitchen, where Turner again chose dark floors and white walls, along with subtly gold-veined marble for the counters and backsplash. She upholstered stools for the island in yellow linen. In an adjacent seating area, golden pillows brought a warm glow to a sofa in dark velvet and white linen-slipcovered chairs.

Turner enjoyed special validation from first-time visitors to her home: “The nicest compliments came when people asked if it had been renovated. They thought it was an old house.” □



OPPOSITE: Iron banister by architect Robbie Fusch. BoBo Intriguing Objects chandelier. Custom antiqued mirrors. Painting by Kevin Archer. Antique jar. Oly chair in leather. Materials Marketing limestone floor. THIS PAGE: Oly side table. Hickory Chair sofa in velvet. Lee Industries chairs slipcovered in linen. Julian Chichester coffee table. Botanicals by Melanie Turner. Custom rug.





TOP LEFT: Oly bed and stool. RB Casa linens. Antique mirror. Natasha Marshall cotton for curtains. Julian Chichester nightstand. Design Materials sisal rug. BOTTOM LEFT: Antique French settee. Light fixture by Currey & Company. THESE PAGES: Barclay Butera love seat in linen. Oly bed. RB Casa linens. Fabrics by Pindler & Pindler for slipper chair by Suzanne Kasler for Hickory Chair, bed pillows and drapery. Currey & Company coffee table. Art from Suzanne Kasler Collection for Soicher Marin. Stark rug.



