

# SOUTHERN SENSIBILITIES MEET NEW YORK SOPHISTICATION

BROCKSCHMIDT & COLEMAN, PARTNERS IN CLASSICAL STYLE

Manhattan-based designer and architect duo Bill Brockschmidt and Courtney Coleman.

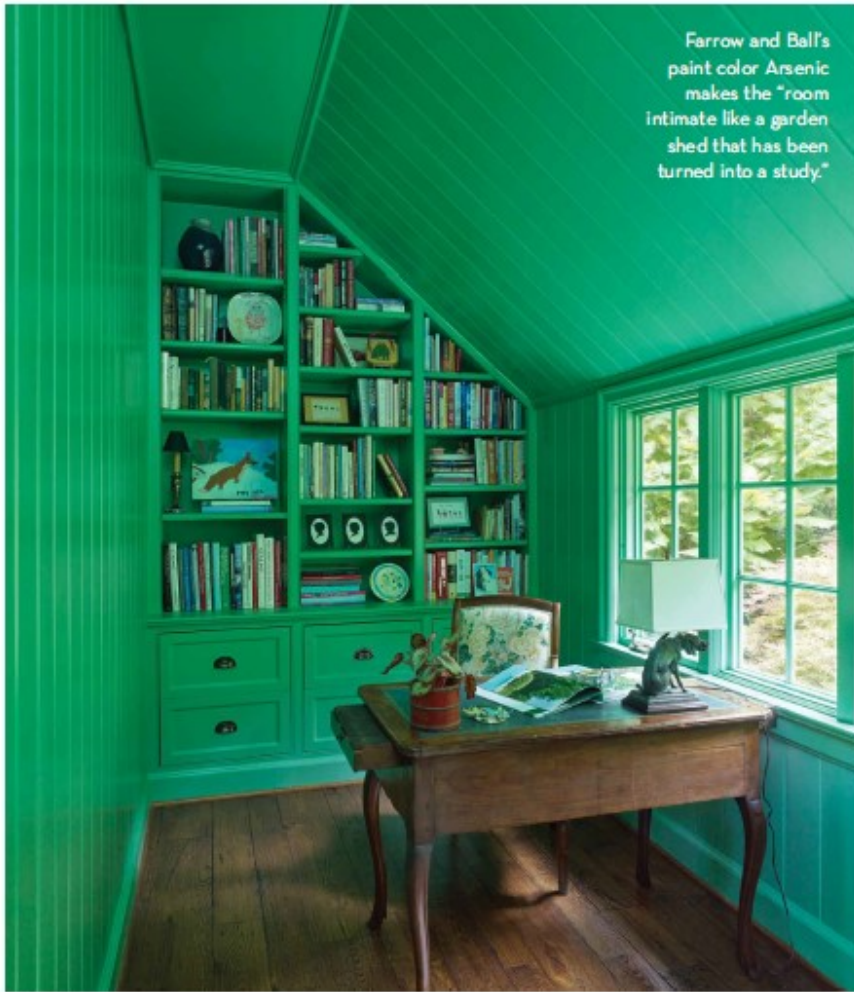


For a project in Birmingham, Alabama, the designers anchored the room with a "custom lacquered coffee table with a paginated parquet de Versailles top that contrasts with the lacquer and relates to the French furniture in the room."

**S**outhern worlds collided when architects and interior designers Bill Brockschmidt and Courtney Coleman met while volunteering for a common interest, the Institute of Classical Architecture and Art. Their shared passion turned into a powerhouse design firm as the pair eventually decided over dinner to merge their talents, and Brockschmidt & Coleman was born in 2001.

It's a perfect business union of sorts, as Brockschmidt (who hails from Virginia) brings an architectural background from the University of Virginia and Eric J. Smith in New York while Coleman (Corinth, Mississippi) has an architecture and design background (her great-aunt was a designer in the Mississippi Delta from the '50s through the '70s) with a degree from Mississippi State and worked with Ferguson & Shamamian Architects and the legendary designer David Easton. Eighteen years and counting, their penchant for classic furnishings, harmonious and often striking color palettes, timeless and functional rooms with an eye towards historical references and a nod to the past is ever present in their work, whether it be a Park Avenue duplex or a horse farm in Pennsylvania.





Farrow and Ball's paint color Arsenic makes the "room intimate like a garden shed that has been turned into a study."



"The interior of the desk is a surprising orange color which gives the room a different character than the living room—which has the same wall color," says Brockschmidt.

Top right: A butler's pantry serves as both decorative and utilitarian.

Bottom left: They chose a skirted table for the dining area, detailing, "You often see them in central hallways, and when the client is not serving dinner here, it does function as the main pathway from the front entrance to the kitchen and breakfast room."

Also omnipresent in their interiors is an influence of the South, where echoes of the past play an integral part in designing for the present. It's hard not to be inspired by their roots, as Brockschmidt, who is a fan of designers David Adler and his sister Frances Elkins, details, "Typically the South has the best in traditional décor and a very undecorated look that mixes with antiques and is comforting and interesting." Coleman concurs, "Southerners have always been the most sophisticated consumers. They travel, are well-educated, and their interiors are very personal. They love sentimental antiques that tell tales about them. We find that heirlooms set the tone."

Southern sensibilities and a love of historical interiors came into play for the *ELLE Decor* A-Listers when they were tapped to redesign and decorate the Nashville home of the Pulitzer Prize-winning presidential historian and MSNBC pundit Jon Meacham, his wife Keith and their three children. Returning to their roots (the Sewanee-educated Meacham is a native of Chattanooga and Keith is from Mississippi), the couple fell in love with the 6,000-square-foot Georgian white brick home once known as "Horseshoe Hill" that sits atop four-plus acres in Belle Meade. Built in 1915, the gracious home had what can best be coined as "good bones." The goals were simple—a home comfortable for family and entertaining and a library big enough to accommodate the books of a former Executive Editor of Random House and eight-time author.

"When the Meacham's moved back, they hired us along with landscaper Ben Page and architect/builder Ridley Wills of Nashville and wanted a southern place that was not too opulent. They wanted to hear the floorboards creak and hear the screen door slam," notes Coleman. And since Meacham wanted no changes to the basic footprint of the floor plan, every room had to live up to its potential in terms of function. Some changes ensued as Brockschmidt explains,

Top: For the Meacham house in Nashville, the designers took the original scenic Zuber wallpaper from the hallway and made them into panels for the powder room where "they give an unexpected atmosphere—and the scenes of boar-hunting and reveling hunters seems a bit more humorous."



Bottom: The kitchen hood was designed by architectural designer and contractor Ridley Wills as the designers noted, "It arrived in a pick-up truck driven by the proud maker and it really provides the character of the room."





"The dining room was made circular and the curved side between the kitchen and family room provided a passageway." The designers came up with a brilliant chrome yellow color from Ralph Lauren Home called Monticello Yellow, a nod to Meacham's book *Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power* that he was ironically working on at the time of the move.

Cosmopolitan meets southern traditional as the furnishings came from the antique mecca of New Orleans. "Keith wanted to shop there and we found the quirkiest pieces in the house," says Coleman. Her design partner agrees, noting, "They requested classical forms that were formal and lively and wanted the house to be used for entertaining. They had a beautiful Regency chair and a dramatic 18th-century Swedish settee that made the living room really interesting." Other furnishings added to the mix included a pair of Napoleon III



Top left: As Meacham is a presidential historian and author, the designers ironically chose Monticello Yellow was for the circular dining room.

Top right: A side angle of the living room gives a glimpse of the mix of antiques primarily sourced in New Orleans.

Bottom right: Napoleon III chairs and a 19th-century wing chair provide one of several seating areas in the living room.



chairs, 19th-century wing chairs while Southern art, political memorabilia and one of the designer's special touches—framed maps of the owner's home states dot the walls of the house.

The entry received a dramatic treatment, replacing an existing hunt scene (Nashville is big on horses and fox hunts) with a bold custom colored early 19th-century geometric wallpaper known as "Philadelphia Harlequin 1800-1815" from the design duo's favorite go-to source, Adelphi Paper Hangings. "The entrance had a bland hunting scene that was faded. We took the paper and made it into panels that found a home in the powder room," Coleman details.

And Meacham's library? The sunroom off the living room was turned into a library/office and painted in a lacquered dark-blue paint that early morning cable news watchers will no doubt recognize as a backdrop. "We wanted the dark color of the walls to be cozy and make it feel like a library. The room looks out on the full landscape and your eye just goes there and brings the garden inside."

The result is one that the third President, Neoclassical aficionado, Francophile, and architect Thomas Jefferson would no doubt approve.



Top left: A statue of an eagle forms an impressive and apropos statement in Meacham's library.

Top right: The designers displayed antique maps of the couple's home states on the walls of the stairway.

Bottom Left: A custom geometric wallpaper from Adelphi Paper Hangings adorns the entry hall walls.