

REVAMP, REINVENT, RELAX!

HOUSE CALL

It took more than nips and tucks for designers Bill Brockschmidt and Courtney Coleman to transform a New York doctor's office into a warm and gracious apartment where a Southerner could truly feel at home.

Interior Design **BILL BROCKSCHMIDT & COURTNEY COLEMAN**
Interview **LISA CREGAN**
Photography **CHRISTOPHER STURMAN**
Producer **OLGA NAIMAN**



Symmetry and soothing colors maintain peace in this Manhattan living room. Walls painted in a pale blue-gray, Donald Kaufman Color's DKC-29, "keep things airy and atmospheric," says designer Courtney Coleman. The Zurich lantern by Vaughan illuminates settees covered in Mokum's Smara, with grosgrain trim by Claremont, and a coffee table by Knoll. The new limestone fireplace is from Chesney's. Mirror, Gerald Bland. Sisal rug, ABC Carpet & Home.

“THERE ARE NO
STANDOUT FABRICS.
WE WENT
FOR NUANCE.”



In the second seating area of the double-parlor living room, a painting by Sally Bennett introduces the sizzle of red to the neutral palette. Curtains in Mander by Penny Morrison harmonize with armchairs covered in George Spencer Designs' Strie from Claremont. Sofa, George Smith.

LISA CREGAN: This entry hall was once a doctor's waiting room. Where's the aquarium and stack of five-year-old magazines?

COURTNEY COLEMAN: It was a total gut, and what a challenge! Our clients, Leslie Gordon Johnson, who's cofounder of the online cashmere shop Josephine & Laurentina, and her banker husband, Jim, waited 10 years for the chance to expand into the physician's office next door to their apartment. When the doctor finally sold, they inherited a rabbit warren—labs, exam rooms, reception desk, waiting area. It was a big puzzle for us to figure out.

BILL BROCKSCHMIDT: The first time we visited the space, the doctor was still in there on the phone, and there were patients in the waiting room. We found randomly sized windows, differing wall depths, ceiling heights askew. There were strange columns and plumbing soffits. It took us about a year altogether, but this is now a true New York maisonette with 4,000 square feet that's perfect for this couple and their children, Colin, 18, and Josephine, 16.

How did you bring harmony to such an oddball collection of architecture?

BB: First the trim needed to be made dramatic—to suit the enlarged rooms and bring some elegance to the bland former office suite. Since the entry has a low ceiling, we designed its crown molding deeper than it is tall—it projects out 10 inches into the room but is only four inches high. That gives the illusion of grandness and height. Lacquering the ceiling in the dining room made that space feel tall and important. And in the guest bedroom, which we carved out of tiny exam rooms, we used a busy wallpaper pattern to distract from the zig and zag of the walls.

Anything else that helps knit this together so successfully?

CC: Notice how the new wood floors are in a high-gloss, ebony-stained finish.

BB: So every room in the house now has bright white trim with shiny dark floors. It unites the disparate spaces while keeping things crisp.

Did your client have any requests beyond resolving the crazy layout?

CC: Leslie is originally from Mississippi—I am I—and she had this idea that her living room should function like a Southern front porch, a place where people have good conversations, tell stories, and spill secrets. Bill is from Virginia, so we both immediately got what she wanted. The ceiling of a Southern porch is usually painted light blue; here we



ABOVE: Entry walls are in California Paints' Volute for contrast. Bench in Schumacher's Maroc. Pendant, Blanche P. Field. **OPPOSITE:** Phillip Jeffries's Diamond Weave grass cloth adds an informal note to the Crystals Galore chandelier from English Country Antiques. Banquettes in Rose Tarlow Melrose House's Fleurette. Curtains in Jim Thompson's Kaleidoscope.

put blue on the walls and used a casual straw carpet. Even the lanterns are porch-like.

BB: The room is a double-parlor arrangement, and the seating in both areas is on legs rather than with heavy skirts. And all the fabrics are casual.

CC: We also purposely painted the entry a dark teal so the living room, like a porch, would look open and light by contrast.

Do people really sit in this living room and divulge their secrets?

CC: We've heard all sorts of tales in there! One of the best things about this project was getting to know Leslie and her large circle of friends. Every Sunday, she and Jim host a dinner for their children's friends and anyone else who's in town.

So this dining room gets a real workout.

BB: And then some. The table moves over to the banquettes in the niche when Leslie needs to squeeze in a second table. She can go formal or informal. The relaxed grass-cloth walls are dressed up with a grosgrain-ribbon border, and the classic Hepplewhite chairs are bleached for an easygoing look.

There's such peacefulness in the repeating colors here.

BB: We used only blues, grays, buff, oyster, and teal. Leslie has a serene kind of style—she thinks people's personalities should shine more brightly than the decorating.

CC: There are no standout fabrics or bold accents. We did nuanced things, like painting the dining room ceiling one shade darker than the living room walls.

BB: Rooms recall one another without being obvious.

Would you take offense if I said your style leans traditional?

BB: We don't shy away from that word. This architecture is in the manner of grand old New York apartments. We like continuing good traditions—hand-blocked

wallpaper, grass cloth, embroidered bed linens. When Leslie showed us a flowery fabric of her grandmother's, it led us to the floral we used on the living room sofa pillows. It's a gracious fabric. It's got an old-fashioned feel.

How does this place already seem so settled?

CC: It's very personal. Many things were contributed by friends, like the artist Hunt Slonem, whose paintings are in the foyer and over the master bedroom bureau. The bunny on the living room coffee table was made by a Mississippi potter. And the frame over the guest room desk, where Leslie pins invitations and keepsakes, came from her pal Angèle Parlange, a designer in New Orleans. All these personalities coming together help give this place great energy.



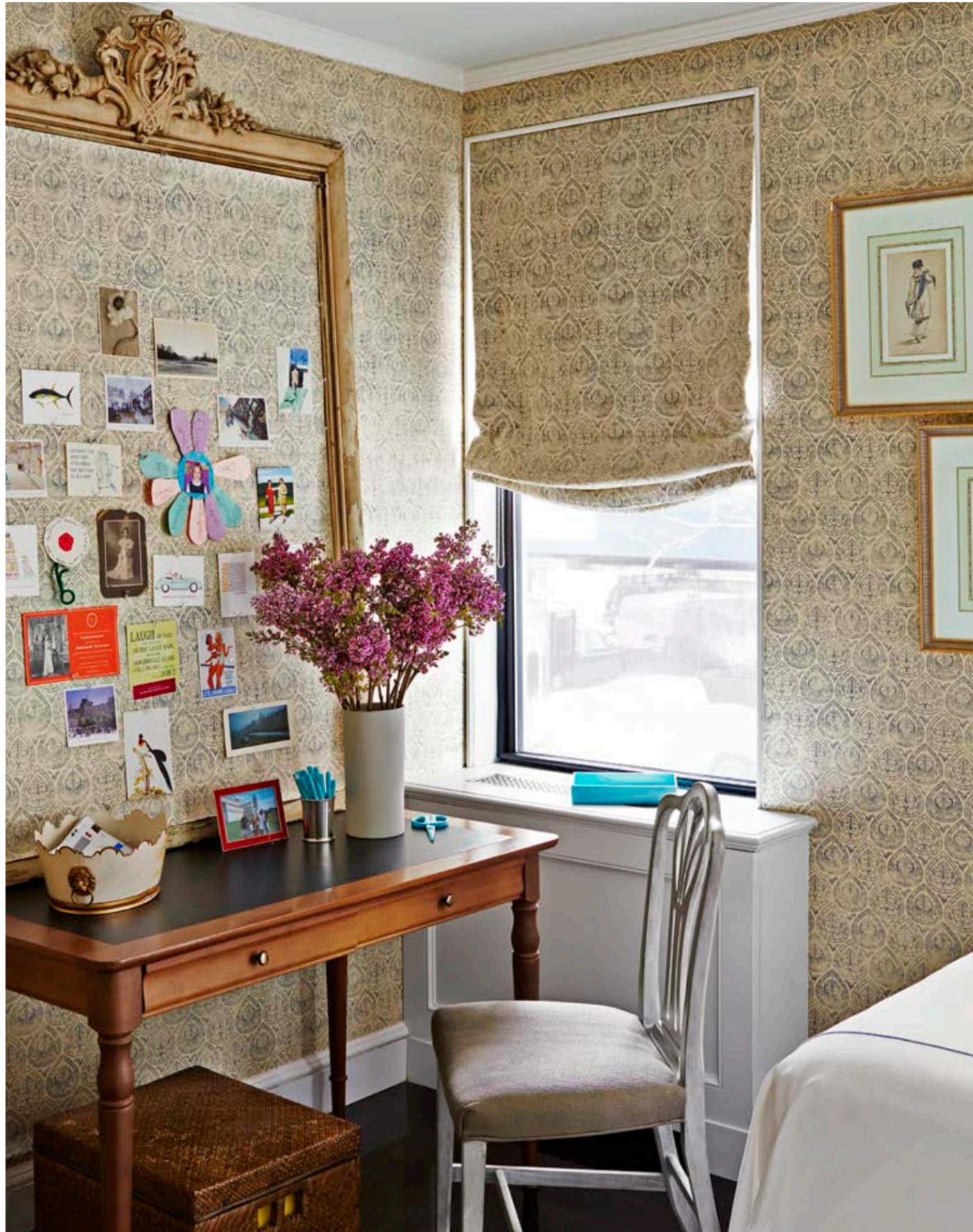
“WE LIKE CONTINUING TRADITIONS, LIKE EMBROIDERED BED LINENS.”



In the master bedroom, walls in Madison Sheer by Rose Tarlow Melrose House and a headboard covered in Lee Jofa's La Fiorentina stand in for the warmth of curtains. Embroidered bed linens from Julia B. and vintage stools covered in Jasper's Remy.



ABOVE: Christopher Spitzmiller's Natalie lamp and an armchair upholstered in a Scalamandré velvet allude to the home's running thread of blues. The painting is by Hunt Slonem.
LEFT: In the wife's bathroom, Benjamin Moore's White Wisp on walls offsets the vibrancy of Colefax and Fowler's Bowood Union on the windows and chair. A Madeline Weinrib dhurrie picks up green tones. Kohler's Tea-for-Two tub is fitted with Newport Brass's 365 Series fixtures.



In the guest bedroom, a vintage table lamp and a wicker headboard found on eBay “hold up against the strong wallpaper”—Montague by Rose Tarlow Melrose House—“so that nothing stands out,” says Brockschmidt. **OPPOSITE:** An antique framed bulletin board is covered in leftover wallpaper, with window-shade fabric to match. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES