



From a color-tweaked 1780s wallpaper pattern to millwork painted a zingy mint green, an elegantly informal Alabama cottage reflects the open-minded attitude of its downsizing homeowner—and puts her traditional style in a whole new light.

For a graphic update to the dining room of a Shingle Style cottage in Mountain Brook, Alabama, designers Bill Brockschmidt and Courtney Coleman worked with Adelphi Paper Hangings to custom-color its Hamilton Urns wallpaper. The chairs were initially a temporary solution, purchased for the client's first Thanksgiving in the home. "We painted them a chalky white, and everyone fell in love," Brockschmidt says. Greek-key pendant, John Rosselli & Associates.

Interior Design **BILL BROCKSCHMIDT & COURTNEY COLEMAN** Interview **M.K. QUINLAN**

Photography **PETER MURDOCK** Producer **DORETTA SPERDUTO**



New York City is your home base, and you have projects all over the world, but this was your first in Alabama. What was the connection?

COURTNEY COLEMAN: The architect, James Carter, is an old friend of mine, and he's based out of Birmingham. I've always admired his work, but lately he has become almost a cult figure. We met this client through James. She was recently divorced and downsizing from a larger, more traditional home in Birmingham. It was dark and taupe and sort of heavy. She wanted to do something different—to create her own style. When this Shingle Style cottage that

James had designed 15 years earlier came on the market, it had the perfect open floor plan for her entertaining needs, but the interior was a little too rustic for her taste. We opened it up and made it lighter.

M.K. QUINLAN: I don't pick up any rustic vibes. What elements did you eliminate?

We painted the living room walls a paler color—Farrow & Ball's Mizzle—and whitewashed the natural wood ceiling beams. The client had existing furniture from her old house, including amazing neoclassical pieces like bronze lamps and giant horn objets. In this environment, we gave them room to breathe—a clean background where you can really see them in a pretty way. The French doors were stained wood; we

painted them midnight blue. Darker muntins on doors and windows don't stop your eye the way white can, and the view into the garden is so beautiful that we wanted to bring as much of that inside as possible.

Mint-colored millwork was a bold decision. Why go there?

BILL BROCKSCHMIDT: The paint is Arsenic by Farrow & Ball. It was a very intentional choice that is funky but also relates to the lush, green landscape outside. We wanted to give this client something new. Take that color out of the house, and the palette would feel too safe. We relied on contrasts like this throughout to balance the darker hues of the furniture she brought from her old house. Another example is the bright

**ABOVE, FROM LEFT:** The butler's pantry, adjacent to the dining room, includes millwork designed by the home's architect, James Carter. Coleman and Brockschmidt on the screened porch. **OPPOSITE:** The study was designed to look like an attached garden shed. Like the millwork throughout the house, it was painted in Farrow & Ball's Arsenic—a fresh and vibrant green hue—to contrast with the home's more traditional architecture. The client's desk chair was re-covered in Lee Jofa's Althea Linen.



The screened porch is the heart of the home for at least three seasons of the year. Its whitewashed swinging bed came with the house and is a popular perch for watching football games on the porch's television. The rattan furniture was purchased by the homeowner on her annual trips to the Round Top Antiques Fair in Texas.

blue lacquer on the living room's coffee table, which enlivens the space in a way that a leather ottoman wouldn't have.

**The dining room's wallpaper is fabulous—but dramatic for a Shingle Style cottage.**

**BB:** James told us that when the house was built, the original clients had thought about doing a scenic wallpaper here. That seemed too formal for this client, but we did want something with impact, because this is the first room you see when you enter the house. A lot of early-American homes had wallpaper that was made for the grand estates of Europe, so the scale was often different. This one from Adelphi Paper Hangings is actually a neoclassical American design from the 1780s. We liked the bold, oversize urn pattern in a cottage-style home; the bright color tones down the formality. We team up with Adelphi regularly to custom-color their papers in a way that respects the original but works for our particular projects. Here, the crispness and clarity of the green combine with the client's collections in a way that feels natural, but not obvious.

**A skirted dining table also seems like a departure.**

**BB:** 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. For that reason, we didn't clutter the room with lots of extra furniture—plus, she has use of the nearby butler's pantry for serving and storage. And because she loves to top the table with a centerpiece—flowers, seasonal pumpkins, or Christmas decorations—a pared-down room works because she can change it for the seasons. Even the painted tole pendant seems more like a central-hall piece rather than a traditional dining room chandelier. The color of the table's skirt doesn't quite match the room, but that's deliberate: It feels like something she might already have had.

**None of the rooms in this house feel very matchy-matchy. Is that intentional?**

**cc:** Someone said recently that our work looks "undecorated," and I think that's something we like to embrace. We don't want rooms to appear too perfect, as if a professional has touched every inch. We prefer to express the character of the person who lives there.



**ABOVE:** The living room was designed with one large seating group to suit the client's casual style of entertaining: "We wanted to fit as many people around the fireplace and TV as possible, so the sofa is long and the chairs are especially comfortable," Brockschmidt says. The custom sofa is covered in a French terry cloth by Le Manach.

**BELOW:** Gardener Norman Kent Johnson installed a gravel dining terrace; outdoor table and chairs, Restoration Hardware.



In the breakfast room, the designers turned what was once a cumbersome media cabinet into an open bookcase with a drop-down secretary desk that is painted a deep orange on the inside. "It's a level of detail that's beyond what's expected," Brockschmidt says.

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