





BEYOND CLASSIC

*A renovation
eases the
formality
of a 1920s
estate in
Nashville.*

INTERIOR DESIGN BY BARRY DIXON
RENOVATION ARCHITECTURE BY DANIEL LEE
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE BY PAGE DUKE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS
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“When I’m
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A tall pedestal topped by a massive urn anchors the room.

OPENING PAGES AND THESE PAGES:
Wing chair, Rose Tarlow Melrose House, in Taffard fabric. Stools in Rubelli fabric. Sofa table and sconces, Niermann Weeks. Pillows in Boussac stripe. Daybed, Panache, in Clarence House velvet. Sofas, Barry Dixon for Tomlinson/Erwin-Lambeth, in Myung Jin fabric. Custom pedestal. Club chairs, Donghia, in Clarence House fabric. Fringe, Samuel & Sons. Antique iron table. Gold log table, Phillips Collection. Wall panels, Zuber. Oushak, AMS Imports. Chandelier, Dennis & Leen.



Many Southerners take pride in two things: being hospitable

and embracing their family heritage. These ideas were foremost in the minds of Virginia-based designer Barry Dixon and his clients, former Tennessee Senator Bill Frist and his wife, Karyn, when they renovated their 1920s Nashville estate, which was also Frist's childhood home.

"Yes, it's a classical house, but what we hoped we did was deconstruct that formality to make

it feel fresh, modern, and livable," says Dixon.

The Greek Revival manor house, typical of white-columned antebellum architecture, resonates with Southern elegance. The scale is grand, but the newly enlarged interior remains warm and welcoming. Here, everyone—from the Frists' three 20-something sons to visiting political dignitaries—is meant to feel at ease. "The home is flexible



The green leather tabletop inspired the wall color. THIS PAGE: Chairs, Hickory Chair, in Townsend leather and Fortuny fabric. Georgian table, Randall Tysinger Antiques. Chandelier, David Iatesta for Holly Hunt. Curtains and ceiling in John Rosselli fabric. OPPOSITE: Chairs, Barry Dixon for Tomlinson, in Fortuny fabric. Table, Holly Hunt. Chandelier, Niemann Weeks. Antique urns. Curtains and walls in Donghia silk. Fireplace, Chesney's. Sea grass rug, The Floor Gallery.

“The home is flexible enough to host a hundred 23-year-olds, or the president of the United States, or the rock star Bono.”

The 1920s living room is now a cozy parlor. THIS PAGE: Sofa, Barry Dixon for Tomlinson, in Zoffany woven. Antique lamp. Pedestal table, New Classics. Antique fauteuil in Scalamandré fabric. Upholstered chair, Dessin Fournir, in Quadrille stripe. Ceiling fixture, John Rosselli. Antique intaglios. Curtains in Scalamandré fabric. Trim, Samuel & Sons. Wall covering, Gracie. OPPOSITE: Custom sink, Renaissance Design. Sconces, Chameleon Fine Lighting. Antique mirror. Tile, Renaissance Tile & Bath.





enough to host a hundred 23-year-olds for breakfast before the steeplechase, or the president of the United States, or the rock star Bono,” says Mrs. Frist, who speaks from firsthand experience.

In updating the house for the twenty-first century, Dixon and renovation architect Daniel Lee expanded the spaces for entertaining. They designed a two-and-a-half-story living room addition—the mansion’s focal point—replete with Greek-inspired pilasters and twin fireplaces. Dixon softened the formality of ornate millwork with gentle, creamy tones and richly textured, patterned fabrics.

“When I’m working with scale like this, I want to make the spaces approachable and human,” Dixon says. “I couldn’t let the living room become a hotel lobby. I had to maintain a sense of intimacy and graciousness. There is almost a laid-back feeling, which comes from the plush, comfortable upholstered furniture and the light, understated colors.” He balances the neoclassical with a decidedly modern restraint. “No swag curtains here.”

Similarly, in the middle of the room—halfway between a pair of stately grisaille wall panels depicting classical Italian landscapes—a contemporary, metal mesh pedestal adds an edgy energy.

The family room—also an addition, with twenty-two-foot-high ceilings—is another place where the designer played with generous proportions. Geo-

Textured surfaces make the room feel more casual. **THIS PAGE:** Chairs, Tomlinson, in Quadrille fabric. Sofas, RJones, in S. Harris fabric. Ottoman, George Smith, in Watts of Westminster fabric. Floor lamps, Donghia. Sconces, Panache. Fireplace, Chesney's. Wall covering, Newcastle Fabrics. Antique painting, **OPPOSITE:** Chairs, Bausman, in Rubelli fabric. Antique table. Curtains in Lee Jofa fabric. Trim, Samuel & Sons. Light fixture, Paul Ferrante.



metric floor lamps framing the fireplace are more than six feet tall, and the fireplace itself is so large you could practically walk into it. Still, the room doesn't overwhelm. "I broke up the verticality of the walls into horizontal layers with a grid of limed oak paneling on the bottom and African thatching at the top," explains Dixon. "That tamed the room."

The house's original spaces, all smaller, are just as dramatic. In the living room-turned-parlor, Dixon employs the shimmer of metallic wallpaper and mixes antiques with new chairs in bright stripes.

Another recurrent theme is the melding of East-

ern and Western influences. The dining room walls, covered in a Donghia fabric with a subtle Raj cartouche design, play against English-inspired chairs by Dixon. The "hers" master bath mixes a Romanesque sarcophagus tub from the 1700s, a Ming dynasty screen, an inlaid Indian chair, and a chinoiserie chandelier. Such an array could create a chaotic aura, but the effect is quite the opposite.

"If a room defies definition by period and place, it approaches a timeless realm," says Dixon. "These interiors feel serene because the pieces are elemental yet classical." □

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