

# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

THE INTERNATIONAL DESIGN AUTHORITY

APRIL 2012

## Designers' Own Homes SIGNATURE STYLE



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# A Perfect Union





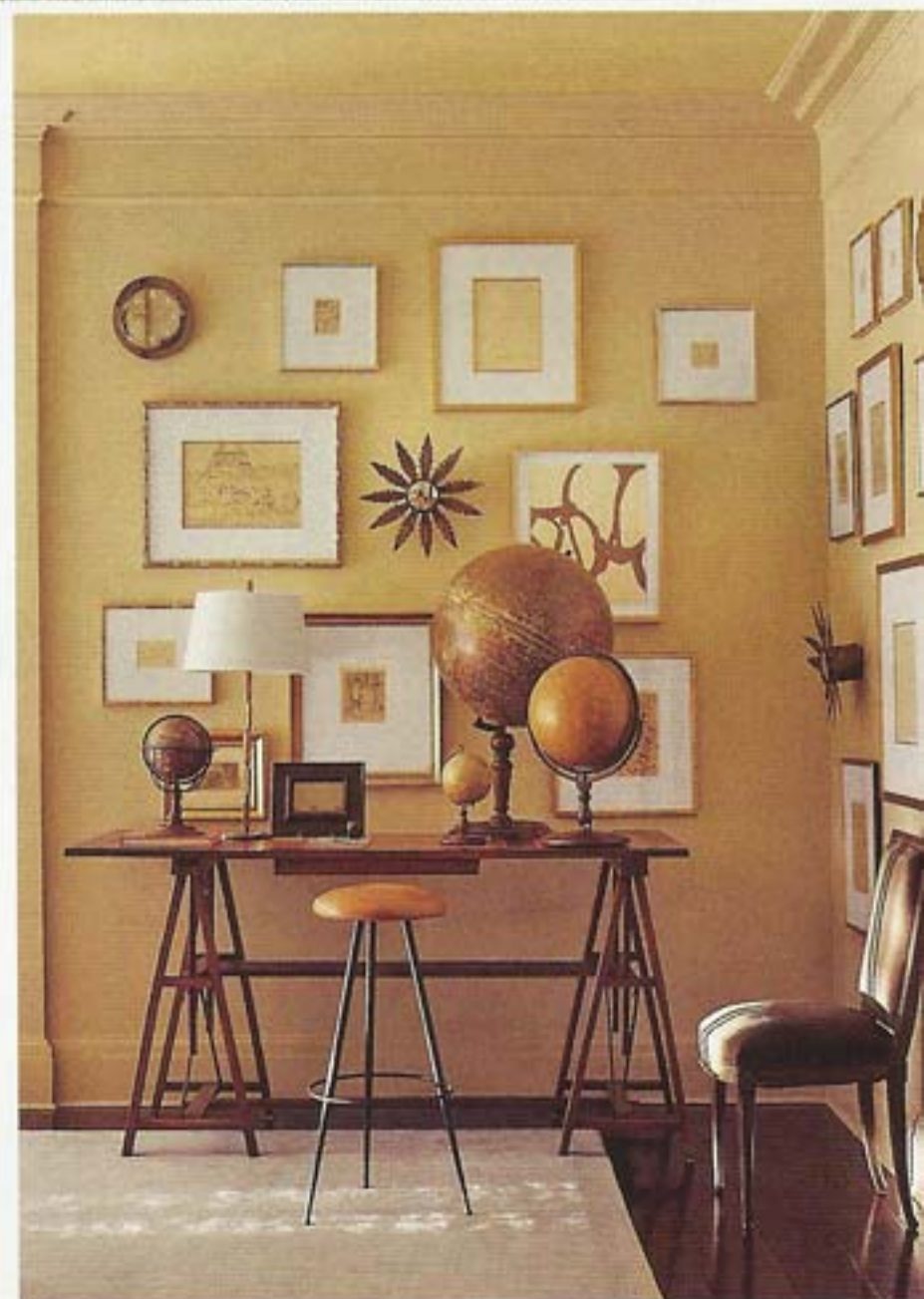
**T**he itch to relocate is an occupational hazard for an interior designer, no matter how picture-perfect her current abode. What decorator can resist taking on a new project where no one will second-guess decisions or rein in an inspired idea? “Clients often have trouble visualizing end results,” says Atlanta-based trendsetter Suzanne Kasler. “In my own house, I get to do things I can share with the people I work for, showing them how it can all come together.”

That was the impetus behind the designer’s recent move to a 1930 Federal-style fixer-upper with her family—husband John Morris, an executive at office-furniture giant Steelcase, and their college-student daughter, Alexandra. “I wanted a new canvas to work with,” Kasler readily admits. “There are also elements, like floors and hardware, that you never upgrade unless you move. Of course,” she adds, only half

joking, “this is exactly how designers rationalize buying a new home.”

Kasler had plenty of other great reasons for acquiring the two-story property in the old-guard Atlanta neighborhood of Buckhead: more square footage, a lush hilltop site complete with a minimalist lap pool, a shorter commute. Her office is just a few minutes away, enabling her to invite clients home to check out unusual details, like wide-plank walnut floors treated with a semigloss finish that mimics French polish. “It can be hard to understand the concept of doing special finishes until you see them with your own eyes,” she says.

Many such illustrative examples are threaded through Kasler’s new rooms, not least of which is how to transform an unassuming building with good bones into a stunner that recalls the early-19th-century mansions dotting Regent’s Park in London. “I’d wanted a house with a





**Clockwise from top left:** Kasler on the balcony of the guesthouse. Vintage armchairs discovered at a flea market in Avignon, France, are grouped on the lawn near the pool; peegee hydrangeas are planted beside a folly-like shed. The first floor of the guesthouse serves as a garage. A circa-1780 French stone mantel is the family room's focal point; the mixed-media work above it is by Dusty Griffith, and the chandelier is a flea-market find. **Opposite, from top:** With a new limestone portico and a fresh coat of cream-color paint, Kasler's house now possesses the mien of an English Regency mansion. Prints and drawings by Pablo Picasso, Carolyn Carr, and others fill a wall in the family room, above a drafting table bearing a picturesque arrangement of antique globes.





**Above:** Kasler-designed barstools for Hickory Chair stand at the kitchen island; the cabinetry is by Downsview Kitchens, the sink fittings are by Michael S. Smith for Kallista, and the tile is by Waterworks. **Below right:** The kitchen's dining area features an antique Swedish pine table with Regency chairs; the pendant lights are by James Huniford Collection. **Opposite, from top:** The dining room is furnished with a table and chairs from Kasler's line for Hickory Chair; the room's dark-leather-clad chairs are vintage Jansen, the silver-plate punch bowl is by Ralph Lauren Home, the custom-made wall covering is by de Gournay, and the sisal is by Stark Carpet. Sofas by Janus et Cie and 1950s French woven chairs from the Nicholson Gallery beckon from the terrace; the sunburst mirror is vintage.

Regency influence, which works well with the antique and modern furnishings I was planning to use, whereas this was more classic and rectangular," the decorator recalls. "Plus, the interior had been subjected to a contemporary renovation that didn't appeal to me. Yet I was drawn to it." Atlanta-based residential designer William T. Baker, known for his expertise in traditional idioms, expanded the structure to accommodate a family room, master suite, and larger kitchen; in addition he conceived a separate garage with guest quarters above. Baker also contributed limestone details to the façade, namely Doric columns and Greek Revival-inspired window headers, and painted its red brick a warm white. Indoors, period charm was established through gracefully articulated components, like a mirrored frieze that makes the dining room sparkle in sunshine

or candlelight, as well as accents Kasler believes "strengthen the architectural envelope," including charcoal-painted baseboards that lend rigor to the entrance hall.

Ensuring the interior of a house complements its exterior has been a hallmark of Kasler's taste since she went into business more than two decades ago, but this time around that preference seems less pronounced. "A house can be traditional without being slavish to one style," she observes. "Here that idea translated to bringing in the diverse elements I love, such as mantels from different eras." That mix-and-match mode also accounts for her juxtaposing 20th-century French furniture with 18th-century Scandinavian antiques, and Paris flea-market finds with modern-day lighting. Seasoning this heady blend are highlights from Kasler's home-furnishings collection for Hickory Chair. →





And several vintage pieces were imported from her former address; an exuberant animal-horn console that once was the star of her family room now occupies a prime spot in the living room.

Unifying these wide-ranging tableaux is a largely white color scheme. “White sets such a beautiful tone,” Kasler says, adding that a predominantly colorless palette can be a tough sell to clients until its restfulness is experienced firsthand. A quiet spectrum of cream, beige, ecru, and taupe distinguishes everything from the master suite’s Louis XVI-style bed to the library’s oak paneling. Not all is monochromatic, however. The spaces are adorned with textiles—blue linen, apricot silk, honey-gold leather—whose hues seem to intensify amid the prevailing pallor, like tea steeping in hot water. Yet their impact is soft rather than bold. “I like colors with a

gray undertone,” Kasler says, offering yet another aesthetic lesson. “Using the same values throughout a house so everything coheres is a more European approach.”

Further enriching the designer’s home is art collected during her family’s world travels, from watercolors by Russian Suprematist painter Ivan Kliun to contemporary abstract canvases by Susan Wittenberg and Carolyn Carr. And almost everywhere are tablescapes composed of beloved objets d’art. But for all these personal additions, the success of Kasler’s new residence—as both a showplace and a home—depends equally on what was left out. “The key to design is editing,” Kasler says of her decision to keep these interiors cool and calm. “Sometimes design is about how much you *don’t* do.” Besides, smart decorators always tuck away a few ideas for the next house. □