

SIMPLY STYLISH



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“The home needed a revamp that showcased the owners’ New York-inspired contemporary style.”

In the foyer, original black-and-white checkered floors complement the antique movie theater chairs and black-and-white family photographs.

Photo by Sara Hanna



EMPIRE STATE

A relocated family infuses big-city style into a traditional Southern home

FEATURE: Giannina Smith Bedford | PHOTOS: Sara Hanna

After living in Manhattan and Brussels, Laura Dickerman and her family made a big move to the South. Her husband, an executive with an Atlanta-based company, was transferred and in July 2010 the family purchased a traditional brick home in Druid Hills—their first true home of their own after living in New York City apartments and renting a home in Brussels.

“We couldn’t believe that it was considered in ‘the city.’ Coming from Manhattan, we feel as though we live in the countryside,” Laura says of the 1.5-acre property, complete with a rope swing, huge tulip poplars and a wooded park just beyond its backyard border.

Built in 1925, the 3,500-square-foot house perched on a hill was originally a wedding

gift from local architect G. Lloyd Preacher (designer of Atlanta City Hall) to his daughter, Mary Preacher Burke, who lived in it for 60 years (her black-and-white portrait still hangs in the home today). Already renovated once by a previous owner, the four-bedroom, four-bath residence with a guesthouse and pool was almost perfect for Laura’s newly transplanted family of four, but it needed a revamp that showcased the owners’ New York-inspired contemporary style, vast collection of books and special items collected during their international travels.

“We love the clean, sleek lines of mid-century modern furniture ... and we try to avoid too much clutter,” Laura says. “Though we have enough photos, special

objects collected from travels, etc. to make the house feel personal and welcoming.”

To revamp her new Atlanta home, Laura hired design and construction firm Home ReBuilders. The team knocked down large decorative columns inside the home to give it a more updated look and replaced rounded arches framing almost every doorway with sleeker squared-off entrances that Laura says remind her of “a pre-war Upper West Side New York City apartment.” The home renovators also added built-in bookcases in almost every room to display and store Laura’s enormous book collection—a former English teacher who is writing her first novel, she owns thousands of books, including an 1889 complete collection of George Eliot’s novels and a few Charles Dickens novels from 1861 that belonged to her grandfather. To freshen up the home’s colors, Home ReBuilders repainted the dark walls with a calming grayish-blue paint by Porter Paints called Winter Haven and refinished the light oak floors to a dark walnut-and-ebony mix. “We love how lightening the house up in terms



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of paint and opening up rooms with wider doors and building all the bookcases made the house more to our taste," Laura says.

In the kitchen, where she spends much of her time cooking, Laura replaced the black-and-green granite countertops with white-and-gray marble-like granite called Inverno and added a mosaic glass tile backsplash. She also had the dark wood cabinets painted white and the cabinet hardware replaced with Richelieu metal handles in matte chrome. Rather than replacing the wood-paneled appliances to fulfill her desire for stainless steel, Laura took the advice of Home ReBuilders and saved thousands of dollars by re-paneling the front of the Sub-Zero fridge and one of the dishwashers with stainless steel.

After working with Home ReBuilders to complete the larger renovation projects, Laura enlisted the help of architect and interior designer Ebru Ela Ercan of E3. Ercan helped her find a Saarinen pedestal table from Knoll for the kitchen and Saarinen executive chairs for the dining room. In the kitchen eating area—where Laura removed a large fireplace,

three columns and arches—Ercan also designed a workstation with a built-in desk and floating shelves. "Laura really wanted a desk for the kids to come home from school and do their homework and she also likes to have counter space to put her computer on and look at recipes," Ercan says. "The idea was to create one solid piece that encompassed both of those things. I envisioned something sleek and modern and beautifully aesthetic that was just a fluid piece." Built by Stephen Evans Furniture and Fine Woodworking, the birch desk finished in a white lacquer runs almost the entire length of the wall, offering more than enough room for Laura's daughters, 10-year-old Lucy and 8-year-old Isabel, to do homework and art projects.

"I love my kitchen—it's certainly the most beautiful and spacious I've ever had—and I love how the girls do their homework or drawing or reading at their desks while I'm cooking," Laura says. "I used to have dinner parties in a one-bedroom, fifth-floor walk-up in New York City with a kitchen the size of my sink area today. So we've come a long way." ►

From left to right, clockwise:

Set back from the road and surrounded by trees, the two-story brick home is the ideal haven for Laura Dickerman and her family.

Although Dickerman did much of her own interior design, architect and interior designer Ebru Ela Ercan of E3 assisted with specific home projects. Dickerman and Ercan have since become good friends.

The living room's centerpiece is a prized painting above the mantel by Italian artist Alessandro Papetti of a woman in a pool.

The custom desk in the kitchen area fulfilled Laura's desire for a place her daughters could do homework and art projects after school while she cooked nearby.

Previously a dark shade of khaki, the kitchen was repainted in light colors and furnished with molded plywood stools by Norman Cherner.

LAURA'S TOP FOUR FAVORITE THINGS ABOUT ATLANTA

DeKalb Farmers Market: What I love most about this enormous indoor market is the produce section—there are hundreds of fruits and vegetables from all over the world, and hundreds of people from all over the world shucking corn, knocking on melons, deciding among twenty varieties of peppers, stocking up on fresh spices, examining the live fish tanks, and wheeling their overflowing carts around. There may be other markets with more local produce or a better choice of East Asian foods, but the DeKalb Market has the best people watching.

Little Shop of Stories: This is a special independent bookstore in Decatur, the kind that is becoming more rare in the age of Amazon and Barnes & Noble. It's primarily a store for children, but there is a very thoughtful and interesting section for adults as well. They sponsor readings (every well-known children's book author has read there, as far as I can tell!), book clubs, summer camps, book parties, and the people that work there can find you the perfect book for anyone at any age. My girls and I spend a lot of time hanging out in there.

King of Pops: When we first moved here I was getting gas at Buddy's in Poncey Highland. There were about 30 people huddled in the shade near the gas pumps eating popsicles ... I soon learned about King of Pops, brothers who make gourmet popsicles with flavors such as chocolate sea salt and blackberry mojito. Now we look for the King of Pops rolling cart and rainbow umbrella all over town.

Little Five Points Halloween Parade: I have never experienced anything quite like it—the crowd is about as diverse as it gets and people are in a festive mood. The Halloween parade includes neighborhood regulars, tourists, live music, gruesome costumes, tattooed lunatics on bikes, skipping children dressed as fairies, local business people throwing candy from themed floats, drag queens, and a host of marching bands. I don't know if we'll make it an annual tradition, but I do know that seeing it once made us feel good about living in Atlanta.



Above: The master bedroom renovation included the creation of a book-lined entrance to add much-needed storage and a private dressing area for the couple. The room features Jonathan Adler lamps and a bed the family purchased in Brussels.

The nearby dining room is furnished with a Giò Ponti mid-century dining table, Belgian Art Nouveau chandelier and large refinished sideboard Laura's husband commissioned in Belgium. The raw wood country-style piece, which was originally finished with ornate crown molding, was modernized with the help of Ercan and Stephen Evans Furniture and Fine Woodworking into a more streamlined and sleek piece. "We took the top off of it and we swapped out the hardware and got the whole thing stained a dark chocolate and now we love it," Laura says.

Ercan also designed a bookcase and closet in the master bedroom to provide Laura and her husband with more storage. Now, rather than walking into a big open room, the bookcase and closet create a hallway-like entrance and dressing area for the couple. What's more, the newly added closet and

bookcase fit perfectly with the home's original aesthetic. "We matched the molding and the look to what was existing, even down to the doorknobs," Ercan said.

Although Laura infused her family's New York roots and worldly sensibilities into nearly every room in her home, she says her favorite space is the living room. Here, furniture pieces like an Eames chair and surfboard coffee table (given to Laura by her brother as a wedding gift) create a space that has traveled with them through their various adventures.

"I love the living room because we've had those pieces of furniture with us in New York City and Brussels, so it's always the first room we put together and the first room that feels like home," she says.

Who knows, maybe on the next move, a little bit of Atlanta-inspired style will creep into their décor. ■



Above: The property includes a garden, pool and adjacent guesthouse, offering plenty of room for outdoor entertaining.

Left: The dining room mixes Dickerman's contemporary taste of a Giò Ponti mid-century dining table with more traditional décor items, such as the Art Nouveau chandelier picked up during the family's time in Belgium.