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THE ART OF REFINEMENT

*Inspired By Parisian Haute-Monde Design Of The 1930s And '40s,
A Classic Interior Gives Prominence To A Contemporary Art Collection*

INTERIOR DESIGN Barbara R. Westbrook with Amy Morris, Westbrook Interiors, Inc., Atlanta, GA
ARCHITECTURE William W. Brame, Brame Architects, Gainesville, FL
ART CONSULTANT Budd Harris Bishop, Livingston, TN
TEXT Barbara Marshall
PHOTOGRAPHY John Umberger, Jasper, GA



ABOVE: Paintings by Milton Avery and Willem De Kooning flank Robert Motherwell's "Samurai No. 1" above the fireplace in the living room.

RIGHT: Sofas and chairs covered in Glant Textiles and Nancy Corzine fabrics provide a warm counterpoint to an untitled piece by Louise Nevelson.



Helen Frankenthaler's "Source" glows like the sun in the living room's secondary sitting area. Dale Chihuly's glass sculpture rests on the cocktail table.



"Collecting is the art of refinement," Bishop says. "As the owners' tastes have grown more adventuresome through the years, so has their collection of about 100 works." Important pieces by Milton Avery, Willem De Kooning, Louise Nevelson, Joseph Stella and Thomas Hart Benton are included in their expansive collection.

"The goal of any collection is to have a coherent group that represents the very best. Barbara understood that completely," Bishop says. "The house is very accommodating to the art, as it was designed with particular works in mind, but it is equally accommodating for the people who live in it."

Two separate sitting areas — one distinguished by a fireplace, the other by a grand piano — comprise the spacious living room. Moderne furnishings covered in neutral fabrics establish an inviting mood, while soothing, cream-colored walls further the feeling of warmth.

"The challenge with a room of this size is to make it seem comfortable and intimate," Westbrook says. "Furniture can easily be overwhelmed by all that volume."

Near the fireplace, twin sofas and French-style chairs gather around a silver-leaf cocktail table. Underfoot, a muted honey-toned area rug grounds the interior in early 20th-century Modernism.

An eclectic mix of furniture covered in crushed velvets and striped silks faces the piano in the secondary sitting area. Westbrook designed the 1930s-style, blond satinwood cocktail table to contrast with the black piano and bench, and dark wood-framed chair.

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"The strong elements of black create sharp punctuations to the decor, and help highlight the subtle qualities of the house and the artwork," Bishop says.



ABOVE: Bishop says the noteworthy Marsden Hartley painting, titled "Musical Theme," exemplifies the owners' sophisticated taste in art. Barbara R. Westbrook designed the console in this gallery vignette.

LEFT: The dining room was designed around Alex Katz's "Moonlight" oil painting on the wall above the buffet. To the left, Albert Paley's iron candleholders add another artistic element. Jim Thompson's steel-gray silk covers the curved chairs.

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Two main galleries run the length and width of the house. From the master bedroom, one gallery leads to an enclosed garden at the opposite end. In between, a floating wall doubles as exhibit space on the gallery side and a wall on the living room side.

In the dining room, curved chairs pull up to a Ruhlmann-inspired table, softening the room's sharp angles. The pattern of the blue-and-cream antique area rug balances the strong graphic quality of the Alex Katz painting above the buffet.

One of Bishop's favorite works in his clients' collection is a 1912 Marsden Hartley, which “blazed huge trails in American art for its day,” he says. To give it prominence, he positioned the painting above a console and an ottoman in the gallery.

The owners' incredible art, however, faces stiff competition in the solarium, where panoramic views of rolling green hills seem to go on forever. Westbrook chose natural materials, such as sisal and basket-weave rattan, and comfortable fabrics, such as soft chenille, to create a more casual ambiance. An earthy palette of tan and bronze complements the rural setting. Westbrook floated the seating in the center of the room “so as not to create a postage-stamp effect,” she says.

“I've never worked with an art collection of this caliber,” Westbrook says, “but the combination of clean lines and warm, elegant materials resulted in an interior where the art truly feels at home.”

RIGHT: Jacques Lipchitz's “Mother and Child” bronze pops against the solarium's picturesque backdrop of rolling green hills. John Saladino's glass table lamps softly illuminate the casually elegant setting.



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Surrounded by 800 acres of gently rolling hills just outside Gainesville, this northern Florida home resembles anything but a stark art gallery. Classic yet comfortable furnishings give prominence to the owners' striking art collection without neglecting their desire for an inviting home.

"The owners knew they needed an appropriate house for their collection, but they also wanted a welcoming home for themselves and their guests," designer Barbara R. Westbrook says. Taking her cues from the Parisian haute-monde interiors of the 1930s and '40s, Westbrook designed a spare yet elegant interior that is more Moderne than hard-edged contemporary.

"Everything here is clean and precise, but with a warmth to it," says Westbrook, whose pen-

chant for prewar French design, particularly pieces by Jean-Michel Frank, is evident throughout. In fact, Westbrook referenced books on Frank and Jacques-Emile Ruhlmann during the entire design process.

Her restrained approach met with the approval of Budd Harris Bishop, the former director of the Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art in Gainesville and the owners' art consultant for more than a decade.

ABOVE: Budd Harris Bishop, the owners' art consultant, chose early 20th-century paintings by such artists as Thomas Hart Benton, Joseph Stella, Ralston Crawford and Charles Sheeler for the gallery's floating wall.