

MILLIEU

WINTER 2019





focal POINTS



Barbara Westbrook designed the rooms of a new Atlanta home in such a way that every object and work of art stands out on its own

INTERIOR DESIGN BY *Barbara Westbrook*
ARCHITECTURE BY *James Choate*
STYLED BY *Anita Sarsidi*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY *Richard Powers*
WRITTEN BY *Edward McCann*



Opening pages: A defining feature of the rooms of an Atlanta home is a varied collection of crafts, artworks, and early American furniture. Tall display cases in a hallway are filled with earthenware works. A circa-1800 American step-back high chest fills a corner of the family room. This page: in the family room, Barbara Westbrook designed the sofa and swivel chair, both upholstered in a Christian Liaigre fabric. The Windsor chairs are upholstered in a linen from Pindler. Draperies are from Sandra Jordan. Pratt & Lambert's "Seed Pearl" is used on many of the interiors.



Above: Open kitchen shelves display ceramics by working artists at North Carolina's Penland School of Crafts. The Wolf range is paired with a custom stainless steel hood. Tile is from Waterworks. Right: The dining room features lithographic prints on paper by David Hockney. Westbrook designed the double pedestal dining table and chairs, upholstered in a de Le Cuona linen. Custom etched glass teardrop pendants hang from woven, blackened bronze mesh.





Opposite: In the stair hall, pottery by Asheville artist Alex Matisse (great-grandson of Henri Matisse) is positioned beneath a photo of the construction of Atlanta's Bank of America building. This page: In the master bedroom, a shade of Sherwin Williams sets off the custom bed, with a headboard upholstered in Rogers & Goffigon linen. The custom bedside table features pulls by Holland & Sherry.

SO TAKEN WAS designer Barbara Westbrook with her clients' collection of art and antiques that she contemplated the elements, often well into the night. She sketched, she made notes, she continued to envision ways to integrate and display the treasured objects—vintage earthenware, vibrant artworks by such disparate masters as Audubon and Hockney, and pieces of exceptional early American furniture. In configuring the rooms of the newly constructed Atlanta home, Westbrook wanted to honor the many objects—collections built up over two generations. "The real challenge was how to organize those wonderful collections of art and antiques in a way that satisfied me as a designer and satisfied them as the collectors," says Westbrook.

As the principal of the Atlanta-based Westbrook Interiors, Westbrook relished the design challenges inherent in this project: a new home for a pair of long-married attorneys, a couple with four children now grown—but who were by no means done with their collection of art and antiques. Westbrook has known these homeowners for years. "The wife has a great eye," says Westbrook, "and comes from a family that appreciates beautiful things. She's the person who walks away from a yard sale carrying the best thing there. It's just a joy to work with an educated client who understands crafts and craftsmen."

Westbrook clearly finds joy in much of what she does, and especially likes consulting with the architect and homeowner at the very beginning of a project when she can help steer aspects of the home's development. She views this phase as akin to working a puzzle, adding, "I think it's great that they let me move a tub around, or shift the position of the kitchen island for better traffic flow. That stage of development, when all is still possible, is so exciting to me."

That level of collaboration between architect and designer may seem unusual, but speaks to another of Westbrook's long-standing relationships—with architect Jim Choate. "I love his modern houses," she says. "There are these interesting reveals throughout this one, like the beams in certain rooms. Instead of being exposed as you might expect, they're wrapped in Sheetrock, creating a beautiful rhythm and texture overhead." Westbrook says Choate's drawing set for this project was precise and "super thick," running to a hundred pages, detailing even the placement of light switches. The result is simple and comfortable for

her clients, but with adequate space to entertain and to host overnight guests. "Couples often want enough space for all the children to come home to visit," says Westbrook, "including room for actual or future grandkids."

A common approach for Westbrook, with every design project, is to view the work as two distinct parts: there is the construction phase and the decorative phase. "The rooms reveal themselves as you identify the architecture and begin to instinctively know what the interior should look like. It's a process of synthesizing the client's vision for how they'd like to live, with conversations centered on the question, 'What have you always wanted in your house?' It's the privilege of helping to shape someone's dream."

Westbrook designs interiors in layers, establishing the first layer with area rugs and upholstery before assessing the spaces to see where the artwork—the last layer—works best. Final decisions about the placement of furnishings and art take place during installation, with she and her longtime associate, project designer Elizabeth Hanson, on-site surveying light and shadows and the relationships of furnishings and objects. "The older I get," says Westbrook, "the less set I am regarding a plan. The placement of those wingbacks or that sculpture might look good on paper, but once they—and you—are in the space, it really becomes a matter of 'Let's move those a bit to the left, and hold that piece up to see how it looks over there.' You do need to be there to see things in order to place them effectively."

The clean, bright interiors Westbrook and Hanson developed support a collection of art and antiques a lifetime in the making. "Collectors do have a lot of things," says Westbrook, "and the emotional and associative links to those things create profound attachments." Throughout, Westbrook successfully combined antiques with decidedly contemporary furnishings. Modern pieces are displayed in the living room, where the couple receives guests, while the family room and bedroom have more antiques.

"With clients who are this careful about what they bring into their home," says Westbrook, "I want them to see and enjoy every aspect of their collection daily." ■

Barbara Westbrook found it a welcoming challenge to have to incorporate into the rooms an extensive and ever-growing collection of art, objects, and furnishings.

"The interiors needed to be simple enough to let the art collections shine, yet sophisticated enough to stand up to them."

—Barbara Westbrook

