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MIDWEST HOME

GOING GREEN

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A Breath of Fresh Air

Old becomes new again when a main level's dated interiors receive a thoughtful, nature-inspired makeover



IT'S SPRINGTIME YEAR ROUND INSIDE THIS LIVELY SCREENED PORCH, WHERE WALL POCKETS, VINTAGE POTS, AND A LARGE, PATTERN-PACKED DAYBED ADD A TOUCH OF WHIMSY. THE DINING ROOM FLAUNTS THREE JOHN J. AUDUBON PRINTS OF BIRDS FOUND ON THE PROPERTY—A GREEN HERON, SANDHILL CRANE, AND TRUMPETER SWAN.



“Ninety percent of the time that we’re here during the day, we’re outdoors,” says one of the owners of this 3,800-square-foot house nestled among 40 acres of lush fields, prairie, and wetlands in the Twin Cities’ western suburbs. “When we *do* come inside, we want to be able to rest and relax.”

A simple notion—but one easier said than done. The split-level property was built in the late ’70s, and its interiors were already dated by the time the owners moved in in 1993. Although the couple tackled a major remodel in 2005 (taking everything down to the studs), the two were more than ready for another change after 15 years. “I wanted it lighter, brighter, and more livable,” says the owner. “I wanted it to be softer, more conducive to entertaining, and a place that reflected our personalities.”

With high ceilings, large windows showcasing lovely views of the surroundings on three sides, and a relatively open floor plan encompassing the kitchen, breakfast nook, dining and living areas, and screened porch, the proverbial bones of the main level were fine. What needed to change, though, was the old-fashioned color scheme, worn furnishings, and general aesthetic to create the comfortable space the clients desired. Luckily, Maureen Haggerty of mint interior design knew exactly what to do—beginning with changing the burgundy-and-gold color palette that spoke to an era past.

“In 2005, painted faux finishes were all the rage,” explains Haggerty. “The entire shell, including the ceiling, was washed in gold and paired with upholstered furnishings and area rugs in tones of burgundy.” Floors, cabinetry, and ceiling beams were all made of golden oak, and even the kitchen backsplash was adorned in gold tile. To break up the color monotony, a new ivory tile backsplash was installed, and the kitchen island painted Benjamin Moore Monroe Bisque—a warm, creamy shade that adds elegance to the space.

“Purposeful layers needed to be established. Warm and cool elements were necessary to heighten interest and highlight architectural details and the clients’ whimsical collections,” says Haggerty, who reimagined the space by juxtaposing time-worn antiques with new, tailored furnishings and contriving ways to update existing pieces. (For example, the couple’s McGuire target-back dining chairs—classic pieces they purchased in 2005 featuring a cinnabar finish that is no longer available.) “Originally, they were upholstered in a textured gold fabric which did not enhance the delightful rattan finish,” says Haggerty. “To renew them, we covered them in a spirited Schum-

acher woven stripe that serves as the ‘color wheel’ for the entire space and amplifies the cinnabar color of the frames.”

Bringing the outdoors in was a main goal of the remodel, along with finding ways to showcase the clients’ beloved collections, which ranged from folk art to vintage wall pockets—décor pieces that are typically ceramic and commonly used to store flowers, plants, or ornaments, and of which she had at least 100 or more. “Curating those diverse and extensive collections was quite an undertaking,” says Haggerty, who, along with art consultant Nicole Kappus Solheid of NKS Artsource and the client herself, painstakingly sorted and chose the best ones to put on display. “This allowed each to shine and complement the décor,” she continues, “and the client is delighted to be surrounded by her favorite treasures.”

The living area features side panels made from vintage Belgium linen the client found several years before, and its centerpiece is a custom coffee table made of wood from a barn belonging to the client’s grandfather. “Sometimes, it’s just a matter of breathing new life into things you already own, whether that’s cleaning up a painting, touching up a frame, or reframing an older piece,” explains Kappus Solheid, who not only assisted with the placement of the clients’ collections but also found additional artwork to complement their existing works, such as the colorful painting of an abstracted face in the living area that acts as a modern take on a portrait in the dining room. “I love unexpected pieces that can play off what [clients] already own.”

The dining area also highlights a dynamic trio of John J. Audubon bird prints, a favorite element of everyone involved and a prime example of ushering in the outdoors. The clients, both passionate horticulturalists who have spent years cultivating their land (transforming what was originally fields and farmland into acres of native prairie, a 3-acre pond, wetlands, and natural wildlife habitats), had created a list of some of their most beloved birds living on the property, and Kappus Solheid sourced



OPEN SHELVES AND GLASS-FRONTED CABINETRY ALLOW THE CLIENTS’ COLLECTIONS OF ANTIQUES AND ART TO TAKE CENTER STAGE IN THE DINING AREA. TEXTURAL GRASS CLOTH WALL COVERINGS ALSO ADORN THE HOME, ADDING DEPTH AND SOFTENING THE ENVIRONMENT WHILE SERVING AS A SUBTLE BACKDROP FOR ART. A COLORFUL PORTRAIT, FOR INSTANCE, IS A CLEAR FOCAL POINT IN THE COZY, CURATED LIVING SPACE.



and framed the large-scale prints. “The Audubons are really special to us because we actually have those birds [a green heron, sandhill crane, and trumpeter swan] living on our land,” says the client.

According to Haggerty, it’s the screened porch, filled with weather-resilient furniture to allow for open doors and windows in the warmer months, that is now the go-to room in the house. “Before, it was jumbled and unused, a pass-through to the deck,” she says. “Now, it’s a sanctuary where the clients can enjoy the spectacular views of the wetlands and prairie.” A cozy daybed,

custom-made from knotty pine for a vintage farmhouse flavor, anchors the room, and an over-dyed rug from Pakistan adds a pop of color that echoes the sky. With a side table displaying a collection of vintage pots and a wall showcasing prized wall pockets (some from Czechoslovakia), the space has become a favorite spot for coffee breaks and catnaps, and one that exemplifies its owners’ personalities. “So much of what Maureen and Nicole did inside reflects what we’ve spent years doing outside,” says the client. “It perfectly reflects who we are and how we live—and have lived—our lives.” ✂