

Well Edited

When designer Kay Douglass and her husband became empty-nesters, she chose to build a new “nest” by furnishing it with a carefully edited mix of modern and vintage pieces

When their only son left home for college during the pandemic, designer Kay Douglass and her husband, Jim, decided the time was right to move to lower-maintenance environs. They appreciated the breathing room of their spacious home in the Buckhead district of Atlanta and loved the charm of its neighborhood, but they were keen to let go of the intensive yard work its large lot demanded.

“We work full time and travel a lot,” explains Douglass. “We wanted a yard with a small imprint that would be easier to take care of.” So, when their real estate agent called with news that she found an ideal home down the street with nothing but a stone courtyard outdoors, the couple took a look at the place and made an offer on the spot.

Known for the stylish French and Belgian vintage furnishings she offered as an antiques dealer at the South of Market shops she used to operate in Atlanta, Charleston, and New York, Douglass knew that the kinds of pieces she favors would work well in the new dwelling. “The house was built about 25 years ago and had been owned by several notable people in the design community who added things like stone floors and wood ceiling beams that gave it character and made it better over time,” says Douglass. “I mostly just needed to do some freshening to make it our own.”



INTERIOR DESIGN BY *Kay Douglass*
PHOTOGRAPHY BY *Mali Azima*
WRITTEN BY *Jean Nayar*



When Kay Douglass and her husband purchased a new home in Atlanta, it already came with some vintage finishes, to which she has added. A combination living/dining area (this page and opening page, right) is furnished with two vintage French tables—a marble one from the 1940s and a wooden one from the 1960s. Douglass placed a vintage plexiglass orange bench at each window. A Visual Comfort brass wall sconce (above the bar cart) provides ambient lighting in the evening. The landing of a stairway that leads to a terrace (opening page, left) is paved with limestone.





A sinuously shaped French mirror extends the visual boundaries of a powder room. A vintage architectural rendering, found in Highpoint, North Carolina, is used as artwork. A Visual Comfort brass sconce provides up-and-down lighting, and the vanity faucet is Waterworks.

After redoing all the baths from scratch and brightening the remodeled kitchen with a new backsplash and lighting, Douglass skim-coated the home’s beige walls white to lighten up the interiors. “I love white and wanted to make the most of the amazing sunshine that pours in through the windows,” she says. She also refinished the wood floors with a pale gray stain and converted a fifth bedroom in the three-story home into a large closet for herself next to the master bedroom suite. Once the shell was in shape, she turned to furnishing the rooms with personal panache.

“I love rooms that have dual functions,” says Douglass, “so I try to create spaces with multiple capacities.” The spacious living room epitomizes this approach to design. Anchored in the center with a streamlined sofa flanked by a pair of funky 1970s Italian slipper chairs reupholstered in a nubby bouclé near the fireplace, the extra-large room also features a plush banquette and a vintage marble table at one end near the windowed double doors, creating a place to have breakfast or to spread out appetizers and serve drinks.

“My favorite French dealer posted the slipper chairs on Instagram and I bought them sight unseen,” says Douglass. “The different seating areas make the room feel like an inviting boutique hotel lobby.” Different rugs in each of these areas—one made of pale pink wool beneath the banquette and dining table, along with another made of jute in the main seating sphere—further define each zone with distinct character. “With so much stone on the floor, the rugs also help lighten and brighten the room.”

A mix of contemporary and mid-century pieces infuses a small sitting room—Douglass’s favorite space—with similar spirit. The sleek lines of a custom banquette and a marble table in front of the window echo the casual dining setup in the main living room and contrast with a curvy pair of 1940s French rattan



This page: A bright and welcoming sunroom—the favorite space of the homeowners—is accented with a bold patterned fabric shade, French bamboo chairs, and an abstract canvas by the Birmingham-based artist William McLure, which comes from Holland MacRae. Opposite: The kitchen floor is lined with a runner that Douglass found at a Maison & Objet show in Paris.



The home's upper hall is edged with elaborately articulated metal spindles. An exuberant light fixture, resembling the layered leaves of an artichoke, hangs above. As Douglass says, "I like interiors that are a little skewed, not quite normal."

chairs in front of the fireplace. "I like unexpected surprises," says Douglass, who introduced a zippy touch here with a Roman shade made of a boldly patterned Pierre Frey fabric.

While simplicity is always key to the spaces Douglass designs with just a few carefully edited overscale pieces central to supporting this ethos, she adds punch to her rooms with choice works of art and accents—particularly lighting. "I love glowy things," says the designer, who says she had as many as 200 vintage light fixtures in her showrooms when she operated as an antiques dealer. Vintage mid-20th-century table lamps in bedrooms, hanging globes in the living areas, an iconic 1950s Louis Poulsen artichoke pendant in a hallway, and other exuberant fixtures add sculptural notes to every room. A home should look like it evolved over time. When I find a piece I like, I find a way to work it in. And against the neutral backdrops of each space, the strong patterns of mostly black-and-white abstract works of art stand out. "They inject a splash of poetry," says Douglass, as do occasional bursts of color in the form of bolsters, poufs, and pillows.

The offbeat palette throughout was sparked by a cut of chartreuse carpet the designer used in a striking light-filled circular room on the main level of the house, as well as a large work of art in the living room. "Pale pinks, citrus-y yellows, and bourbon-y browns are colors that make me feel good," says Douglass. And now that the decor is complete, the good vibes they evoke permeate the entire house. "It's like living in a boutique hotel," says the designer. "We wake up in the morning and just feel happy—like we're on vacation every day." ■

Geometry plays a major role in the sitting area of the primary bedroom. A low-slung sofa, set with bolster pillows, is paired with a large round ottoman. A black-and-white grid serves as artwork over the fireplace. A large white paper-art composition, from France, is set on a wall beside the four-poster bed.

