



southern GRACE

By Nancy Atkinson
Photography by Dustin Peck

*"I believe that to be
really modern, you have
to know your history.
It's authentic. It's personal.
It's original."*

INSPIRED BY HER SOUTHERN ROOTS, INTERIOR designer Gray Walker leans toward tradition but has an eye for many styles. She mixes old and new with confidence, incorporating inherited antiques with bold art and classic glamour for a look that is sophisticated, fresh and far from stuffy.

Gray's Georgian-style home in Charlotte's Myers Park neighborhood is a perfect example of her masterful mix. When she found the home – built state-of-the-art in 1967 and in still great condition – she knew her art and antiques were a perfect fit for its rooms.

Her first bold move was commissioning local artist Robin Wellner to create a whimsical oversized butterfly garden in the foyer; Gray's modern take on a classic motif. "It makes me

happy every day," she says.

In the master bedroom she covered the walls in an old school floral but softened the room with neutrals and shades of lavender, throwing in mirrored accents and a Lucite and leopard bench.

A touch of leopard in every room is one of Gray's signature touches to lighten the stuffiness, and in her words, "gives an edge."

"My bedroom is my favorite room," she says. "It's feminine and glamorous. I feel all dressed up even when I'm not."

Gray describes her design process as "falling in love with one object and decorating around it." In the master bedroom, it was the Osborne & Little wallpaper she fell for, creating her uplifting lavender room around it.



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"I love lavender," she says, "Which is something I didn't realize until I moved into this house!"

Though the house was pristine, the kitchen, with its heavy wood paneling, needed an update. Working with kitchen designer Susan Dudley and builder David Brown and his team at Craftsmen Construction, renovated the kitchen with a cleaner, more contemporary look. Mark Bennett of Morgan Landscaping designed a new porch for the back of the house as well as a beautiful new landscape.

Gray's new kitchen features white cabinets, soapstone and Calcutta marble surfaces and a white leather breakfast banquette. The star of the kitchen is the leather-upholstered waitstaff-style door, an architectural element Gray loves to use in her clients' homes as well.

"Upholstered doors give a room lots of character," she says. "The kitchen has a lot of hard surfaces and the door softens things a bit and adds a pop of color. It's a nice complement to all that stone."









Whether in her own home or her clients' homes, Gray sees design as an ongoing process. She likes to shake things up so they never seem stale and says maintaining the perfect mix is a balancing act.

"There is lots of promoting, demoting, painting and decorating going on in my house most of the time," she laughs. "It may only be happening in my brain right now, but it will get done when the mood hits me!" ♦

Gray's Anatomy of Design

- Fall in love with one thing and decorate the room around it.
- Keep your rooms fresh by moving things around. Bring new items in, demote some things and promote others.
- Gray's definition of good design is not over-decorating a house. Edit and stay on subject.
- Don't over-accessorize and go for some serious juxtaposition.
- Keep a style notebook. Fill it with images you love and jot down your thoughts on why you like them.
- Add mirrors to the backs of bookshelves in an older house. It's an unexpected touch that makes the room feel lighter.

