



OPPOSITE: A mirrored console in the dining room assumes the role of beverage center when the Walkers entertain. THIS PHOTO: The modern canvas above the mantel, painted by a Russian artist, inspired much of the home's interior. A savvy, even playful, mix of contemporary and antique furnishings exudes freshness and elegance.



AS A DESIGNER AND COLLECTOR, GRAY WALKER

RIGHT AND ABOVE: A local artisan created the foyer's mural of palmetto trees, which serves as a distinctive introduction to the home's warm palette of golds and greens. An old stair rail sees new life as a console, thanks to a custom-cut travertine top. OPPOSITE: The formal living room welcomes visitors with luscious fabrics and textures (velvets, taffeta, flokati wool); the handmade silk flowers on the draperies were inspired by the flowers on Gray's wedding dress.



Gray Walker hasn't studied art history since her undergraduate days, but this North Carolina interior designer still looks to the old masters (and a few young turks) for inspiration, particularly when it comes to color at home.

"I take my cues on colorations mainly from artwork," she says. "Not many people know color much better than a great painter does, so I typically extract from what they have done on canvas to create a room that is filled with combinations you may or may not expect." Gray used this strategy in her own home, an elegant 1930s Colonial with its original carved Georgian mantel and sweeping staircase. In the case of Gray's house, which she shares with her husband, Geordie, and young sons, Randolph and Robert, it was an

BASES THE COLOR PALETTE IN HER OWN HOME ON FAVORED ARTWORK.



impulse purchase in the form of a large, abstract painting by a Russian artist that wound up dictating the palette and tone for the entire residence.

"I just fell in love with the painting," Gray says. "It had a cool, 1960s feel that I couldn't resist, like something you might have seen in a really hip grandmother's house growing up. I eventually decided I wanted the whole house to have that feel—sort of traditional, but with a twist." As a backdrop to this colorful canvas, which the designer hung above the living room fireplace, Gray chose a warm beige for the walls and a crisp white for the moldings and plaster medallions, which add interest overhead. Gray describes the sunny, sandy shade on the walls and ceiling as endlessly cheerful; the warm-yet-subtle

GRAY CREDITS HER SOUTHERN ROOTS FOR HER BLENDING OF NEW AND VINTAGE



color serves as a perfect contrast to the room's vivid orange accents. Two elongated, hand-blown vases with sleek profiles flank the Russian painting and manage to grab attention in their own right, thanks to their citrusy shade.

The living room's cream-color flokati rug functions as yet another nod to modernism; strategic bits of glass and crystal also convey a midcentury vibe. These accents earn style points for their proximity to the many antique or ornate pieces in this space, including a pair of Italian-style iron-and-gilt sconces that hang on either side of a trumeau mirror. Those objects, as well as a black chinoiserie coffee table embellished with gold detailing, lend a certain gravitas to the space. When taken together, the picture is more than

INTO A SOPHISTICATED NEW LOOK.



OPPOSITE: The dining room ceiling, first painted one shade lighter than the walls, enlivens the space with hand-applied silver leaf. LEFT: A large Venetian mirror brings even more luminosity to the golden-hue space. ABOVE RIGHT: One strand of beads adorns the simple wire chandelier beneath an ornate ceiling rosette.

merely pretty: Gray credits her Southern roots for her instincts in blending new pieces with vintage finds.

"I grew up around colorful chintzes and old porcelains and lots of pretty antiques—what I have come to think of as the 'Southern-belle' look," she says. "But when I studied art, I really gained an appreciation for all different time periods. Now I try to mix it all into one whole composition that is interesting, appealing, and makes me feel at home."

This world view is particularly evident in the dining room. When considered in isolation, the sophisticated space encompasses disparate elements. Gray started with a classic mahogany table and chairs from her husband's family, then set about saturating the room



OPPOSITE: A New Orleans artist hand-painted the Venetian wedding bed, which Gray dresses in fine linens that complement its deep red hue. RIGHT: This French-style reproduction commode has spent the last 20 years in Gray's possession, first residing in her living room and now staking its claim near a chenille damask armchair in the master bedroom.



with color to counter the darkness of the wood. She painted the ceiling a shade lighter than the walls, then commissioned an artisan to apply silver leaf. A decorative chandelier introduces a rich finishin touch.

Another treasure that resides in her master bedroom is a French-style reproduction commode that Gray has owned for more than 20 years. Today, the burl-veneer piece plays host to a glass lamp. Arguably the most striking piece in her room is Gray's lovely hand-painted Venetian wedding bed, which she commissioned from an artist in New Orleans. A group of cherubs frolic on the headboard; the designer then carried the angelic theme to a nearby piece of sculpture, which adorns the wall between the two windows. An ornately framed mirror hangs below. Drapery panels pair with softly gathered valances.

"It's fun to create rooms that have a sort of high-style spunkiness," Gray says. "I tend to like things that are avant-garde and a little unexpected. I am open to anything as long as it's executed well." ✱

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