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The Art of REINVENTION

DESIGNER BLAIRE MURFREE'S PLAYFUL BLEND OF COLOR AND PATTERN
BRINGS MODERNITY TO HER BELLE MEADE HIGHLANDS HOME.

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ARCHITECTURE / PRESTON QUIRK, QUIRK DESIGNS
INTERIOR DESIGN / BLAIRE MURFREE, BLAIRE DESIGNS LLC
HOME BUILDER / KEN WOODARD, COVENANT CONSTRUCTION LLC

Blaire Murfree may have entered Nashville's design scene through the back door, but that doesn't mean she hasn't made quite the entrance. Previously a nurse practitioner, the designer and her family's 2012 move from Washington, D.C. back to the Music City spurred a rediscovery of her design roots. "Design was always in my blood," affirms Murfree, who grew up in Knoxville, watching her parents build and thoughtfully decorate several homes. She studied their decisions and, even as a youngster, insisted on a few of her own.

"My parents and grandparents used the same interior designer," Murfree recounts. "I think he had a love-hate relationship with me. I was extremely opinionated about my bedroom. I vividly remember turning away fabrics he presented because they weren't 'true periwinkle' and read too lavender or too blue. I was 11."

Murfree's ardor for mixing colors and motifs translates naturally to the home she's assembled for herself, husband Davis and their two young daughters in one of Nashville's hottest areas. "In my family, we are storytellers, collectors and lovers of textiles and art. We aren't that serious. I like spaces that are bright, happy and fun—and I wanted my daughters to grow up around that," Murfree says.

Nowhere has that instinct proved more evident than in the Cape Cod-inspired Belle Meade Highlands residence she and Davis purchased in 2012, just before the city's real estate market exploded. A year prior, general contractor Ken Woodard had razed the original house on the lot, retaining only a few key components—namely, the brick repurposed for the new home's foundation, chimney and living room fireplace. Almost every other element of the home was brand new, "but it didn't feel that way," explains Murfree, who was drawn to its classic proportions and details.

Woodard had approached architect Preston Quirk to liaise on the home's design, which the general contractor

based off an Atlanta residence that had charmed him during his years living there. "I was going for something classic and clean and not too Colonial," Woodard explains. "I wanted it to feel timeless, which we accomplished by using reclaimed materials and paying attention to impactful details like doors and millwork."

Murfree says Woodard's thoughtfulness with the buildout is what won over her husband in the end. "Davis is a history buff who grew up in old homes in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, the city that's his family's namesake," the designer explains. "I'm talking very old homes with incredible character. New build wasn't my husband's first choice, but we knew the bones were there—and I had big plans."

For Murfree, that meant her telltale mix. "I'm the kind of gal who loves to wear tailored, classic, forever pieces, but I can't leave the house until I've added an element or two of surprise," she says. "Something to funk it up, modernize it or give it some personality."

By that same philosophy, the designer brought classic pieces into every room: family heirlooms and prized antiques that added an immediate sense of history and timelessness. She kept formal spaces from feeling fussy by making unpredictable choices—incorporating midcentury furnishings, modern wallpaper, daring paint colors and more.

Even the formal dining room—long considered a Southern staple—received a moody tone via deep blue walls that offset an octagonal table that once belonged to Murfree's grandmother, today elegantly draped with a tailored tablecloth. To keep the effect dynamic, Murfree paired custom velvet chairs with sculptural midcentury brass ones, also opting to store china and serving pieces in a burl-wood armoire, "My mother said she didn't understand how I could live without a proper sideboard," laughs the designer, who also bucked tradition by subbing a raffia-covered console for a buffet and displaying her silver tea service on an acrylic bar cart.

Murfree coated the library in a shade of green so dark it reads almost as black—an affectionate nod to a Belle Meade classic color. "Painting the woodwork in high gloss played up the traditional bones, but still made it modern," says Murfree, who adds that it's the ideal backdrop for a prized portrait of Davis' great-great-grandfather.

Painting the adjacent kitchen a pale gray-green provided a pleasing contrast. "I know the eye needs to rest, and moments of calm make the bold even bolder," the designer explains. This approach allows Murfree's well-placed elements of surprise to take a bow—from statement-making light fixtures to her signature layered wallcoverings and fabrics.

It's a fearless balancing act that helps Murfree keep pace with the lightning-quick evolution of the city itself. "Nashville is often thought of as conservative and traditional," Murfree says. "But I think those standards are being ruffled to the right degree. We're diversifying, becoming more cosmopolitan, realizing our homes can be playful and comfortable, without losing elegance—and I love that." ■

“DETAILS ARE WHAT
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A TASSEL THERE.”

—BLAIRE MURFREE

In the dining room of this Nashville home, indigo Schumacher grass cloth and wainscoting in Farrow & Ball's Hague Blue lend a moody backdrop to a burl-wood armoire from Bennett Discoveries and midcentury brass chairs reupholstered in Holland & Sherry's Joli alpaca bouclé. The custom tablecloth was fashioned from Robert Allen fabric with Samuel & Sons bullion fringe. A Fortuny vintage chandelier hangs above.





In the family room, Barrie Benson's Blanche daybed for Highland House, dressed in Holly Hunt fabric and leather piping, reinforces the home's blue-and-green scheme. Acrylic armchairs from Parker & Hyde in Dallas mingle with a custom Moss Studio sofa that wears gray Holland & Sherry wool bouclé. Aerin's Sommerard chandelier for Circa Lighting and Christopher Spitzmiller's Smith lamp bring modern twists.

Opposite: A trio of Suzanne Kasler's Laurent counter stools for Hickory Chair sidles up to the kitchen island, painted in Farrow & Ball's Inchyra Blue. Above, E.F. Chapman's Plantation lanterns add substance without weightiness. Murfree placed a raffia-wrapped backless barstool by Lee Industries on one end for extra seating. The plaster hobnail vase was sourced at SB. by Sarah Bartholomew.

Below: On the porch, Perennials linen and playful fringe dress up an RH sofa, while pillows featuring Zak + Fox fabrics contribute color. Murfree updated the carved antique Indian cabinet with a new stone top and fresh paint. Above an X-base vintage coffee table by Henredon, an antique lantern from Artifacts illuminates the space.



“I LIKE COMPLEX COLORS: A HUE THAT READS AS BLUE IN A CERTAIN LIGHT AND GREEN IN ANOTHER.”
-BLAIRE MURFREE

In the entry, the family dog, Daffney, stands before an antique Biedermeier chest topped with a vintage crystal lamp from Parc Monceau in Atlanta. A custom-commissioned artwork by Eliza Thomas conveys a sentimental message to Murfree's daughter. The walls are painted in Farrow & Ball's Lime White, the antique lantern was sourced from Artifacts and the chair fabric is by The Rosa Bernal Collection.



In the dining room, a Highland House console stands in as a buffet for when Murfree entertains. Holland & Sherry mohair graces a pair of vintage benches and an octagonal mirror by Hickory Chair complements glass-and-brass buffet lamps with shades from Edgar-Reeves in Atlanta.



The master bathroom's walls are awash in Benjamin Moore's Quiet Moments. A Niermann Weeks lantern from Grizzel & Mann in Atlanta presides over a soaking tub by Maax. Mr. Brown London's Pearl chair dons painterly silk by Megan Adams Brooks. The Selena Beaudry artwork is from Hidell Brooks Gallery in Charlotte.



The daughter's cherry red-and-periwinkle swimsuit inspired the fresh palette of her bedroom. "I love pattern on pattern," says Murfree, who injected modern prints via a Catbird chair and customized Courtney bed, both by Highland House. The latter is dressed in a playful fabric by Tennessee textile designer Electra Eggleston. The leaf wallpaper is by Katie Ridder.