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Tricks of the Trade

by Leslie Garisto Pfaff • Photography By Laura Moss

Jennifer McGee was also thinking about livability in her design for the guest room. In a house of generous proportions, this room is something of an anomaly: At just under 13 by 17 feet, it's the kind of space that is often euphemistically described as "cozy." In fact, that's what drew McGee to the room in the first place. "I wanted to create an intimate space," she explains. And surprisingly, the room manages to be intimate (and, yes, cozy) without feeling claustrophobic — no mean feat given the fact that its focal point is a full-sized bed



topped with a towering canopy and draperies. What makes this bed work in the compact space is the canopy's simple, tailored lines. The secret to balancing such a large piece in a small room, McGee says, is editing — making sure that the space is free of clutter and nothing is superfluous. Light is also key: The room includes several reflective elements, like a mirrored dressing table and two Lucite stands holding glazed urns. Walls, canopy, and window curtain are all in shades of ivory, and the curtain is punctuated by a silvery square of wool gauze to allow light to filter through. To echo the drama of the bed, McGee designed two chairs upholstered in navy velvet (now part of the Kindel Furniture line). "They look grand," she says, "but they were also scaled for the size of the



room."



La Bossiere filled the music room with carefully edited art and objects (center) but left the shapely window unadorned.



warm up what might have been an echoing empty wall space, La Bossiere framed 24 portraits from a book of vintage Swedish etchings and hung them so they filled the wall up to the ceiling. “They enclose the corner for a more intimate feeling, and are also graphic and dramatic,” he says. His other tricks for warming up the room included using upholstery fabrics that he calls “visually comfortable,” like a brocaded chenille piece on the banquette and a vividly striped velvet on a daybed tucked invitingly under a massive arched window. Like the series of etchings, a nearly floor-to-ceiling triptych — in actuality, a reproduction of an antique scenic wallcovering, framed in three pieces — helps scale down the room without threatening to deplete any of its essential grandeur.

While the living room was an intrinsically bright space, the library posed yet another challenge: How can you brighten up a room paneled and coffered in dark mahogany? And when the room is a library, how do you avoid the English manor house design clichés: somber, weighty, masculine? One way, says Karen Houghton, who designed the room with associates Andrea Ackermann, Jill Kaliff, Leila Kharem, and Karen Ricciardelli, is to create a space that’s gender neutral — “a little more feminine, but not bedroom-y.” To that end, the team selected fabrics that were light in color and texture: a pair of chairs upholstered in contrasting

chenille and linen stripes, a natural-hued chenille on the sofa, bronze-toned draperies in a cotton/synthetic blend flanking a trio of white Roman shades. “We tried to mix it up with texture and color, using neutrals that were warm but also luxurious and inviting,” Houghton explains. And in a room with dark bones, she says, lighter fabrics allow the silhouettes of the individual pieces to pop, for added impact.

The team didn’t flout tradition entirely. They chose a black leather desk, for instance, and an antique screen hand-painted with wading cranes to warm up a corner. But they kept the room from feeling heavy with contemporary touches like a geometric light fixture from Capitol Lighting and a coffee table that calls to mind a high-end cable spool. Of course, the soul of any library is its books, and as the spouse of a bookseller, Houghton has a feel for bookcase staging. “I like to create a horizontal block of books, put a vertical block underneath that, then stagger the blocks with objects,” she says. “In the end, it’s all about rhythm.”

For more on the Showhouse, including information on the 16 other designers, seven decorative artists, and five landscapers who participated (along with a complete listing of upholstery, fabrics, furnishings, paint, and accessories), visit newjerseylife.com. And mark your calendars for the next Showhouse, scheduled for spring 2010.



“MY GOAL WAS TO CREATE AN INTIMATE SPACE FOR THE WORLD TRAVELER / COLLECTOR, ASPIRING ARTIST, OR POET.”

— JENNIFER MCGEE



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