

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE OF DESIGN

FEBRUARY 2008

SPECIAL ISSUE: BEFORE & AFTER



U.S. \$5.99/FOREIGN \$6.99

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Maryland Makeover

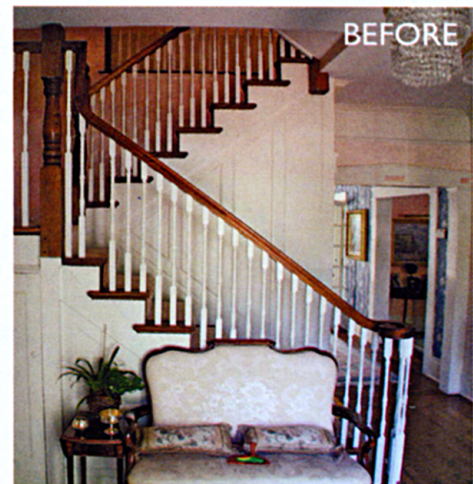
An Italian Renaissance Revival House Is Returned to a State of Grace

Architecture by Wayne L. Good, FAIA/Interior Design by Mona Hajj, ASID

Landscape Architecture by Lila Fendrick, ASLA/Text by Susan Sheehan/After Photography by Gordon Beall



"Our intention was to bring back the character of the original house while still making it modern," designer Mona Hajj says of a 1916 Italian Renaissance Revival residence she and architect Wayne L. Good renovated in Chevy Chase, Maryland. ABOVE: The entrance portico was extended. BELOW AND RIGHT: Hajj had the walls in the entrance hall painted "a light but warm color," she says, "to be a neutral backdrop for antiques."



AS SOON AS A COUPLE HAD RENOVATED their country house on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, a friend came to visit and said, "You're either going to have to sell your city house or renovate, because you'll never again be content with it." The next day, the wife telephoned Wayne L. Good, the Annapolis-based architect who had transformed their country house, and said, "Let's do something." The couple first attempted to find another house in suburban Mary-

land that appealed to them but failed. And so the remodeling of their early-20th-century Italian Renaissance Revival house in Chevy Chase Village began. The owners wanted to enlarge the original dining room, extend the front portico, add a pool pavilion, gut several rooms, restore the plasterwork and...and...and....

According to Good, changing a front portico is easier said than done in Chevy Chase Village, a historic district com-

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AFTER



AFTER



BEFORE

ABOVE AND TOP: The living room was narrow and dark, so Hajj (right) stripped the wallcovering, refinined the floors and created a seating area around the fireplace. A Cantonese baluster vase is near the circa 1820 Irish gilt mirror above the fireplace. "The aesthetic I provided combines conventional Washington and other cosmopolitan styles," the designer says. The zinnia-patterned chair fabric is from Cowtan & Tout.

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posed of some 700 houses in Montgomery County. "The couple wanted to extend the arched portico 42 inches, to gain protection from the elements, but after complicated negotiations with the historic preservation authorities of the village, Montgomery County and the state of Maryland, we were only allowed to extend the arch 30 inches," the architect says. "The freestanding columns we added had to be simpler in detail than the original engaged columns, and the portico extension had to be detachable, so that 500 years from now a purist could detect what we'd added and remove it."

The couple could not obtain permission to enlarge the dining room by tearing down its original exterior wall. "The historical powers that be did let us drop the windowsills on that wall to the floor, thereby converting the windows into passageways to a conservatory that we built behind the dining room," says the

architect. The conservatory provides an additional dining space for large family gatherings or an intimate space for a small dinner. Two earlier additions—an octagonal family room behind the living room and an octagonal breakfast room behind the kitchen—were of such poor

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ABOVE AND RIGHT: A conservatory was added to the house “not only to form an intimate dining space but to make a graceful transition into the garden,” says Good. Hajj combined formal and informal pieces “for a collected and eclectic look,” she says. Circa 1940 French chairs surround the English tilt-top table. Larsen drapery fabric.

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quality that the architect was allowed to demolish them and replace them with classical rectangular spaces. The kitchen was gutted. “By removing a peninsula at the back of the kitchen, I was able to open it up to the breakfast area with a column and a handsome double arch,” Good says. “I made the island longer and designed it with legs inspired by antique Italian tables. The appliances were shifted—they’re now where they should be—and a lot more storage space was created.”

Mona Hajj, the Baltimore-based designer of the couple’s Eastern Shore house, also came on board for their city residence. “I always begin with the rugs,” she says. “I take a look at the floor plan and select the rugs so they can live together harmoniously and effortlessly.”

For the entrance hall, she chose a small Haji Jalili Tabriz rug and an antique Serab runner; for the living room, an antique Tabriz with light blue medallions on a background of muted browns and yellows; and for the study, an antique Laver Kerman. “Mona told me she’d rather have no rug than let us keep the Chinese rug we bought when we decorated the house in 1990,” the wife says. “She was right.” The dining room rug is a late-19th-century Mohtasham Kashan with burgundy, tan and blue predominating. “People should be able to drink red wine without terrible consequences,” Hajj says with a laugh.

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“People should be able to drink red wine without terrible consequences,” Hajj says of the rug in a dining area.



LEFT: The master bedroom. “It’s soothing and inviting,” the designer says. *Path Through the Mountains*, a 19th-century landscape by Cyrenius Hall, hangs above the bed. The still life dates to 1879. A Gothic Revival octagonal mahogany stand is at the foot of the French bed.

BELOW AND RIGHT: Doors from a historic building in Baltimore were installed on the porch. Michael Taylor Designs round table and klismos chairs. Teak furnishings, Sutherland. BOTTOM AND BOTTOM RIGHT: The pavilion. Michael Taylor sofas. Lila Fendrick landscaped the grounds.



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The designer furnished the living room with a mixture of upholstered pieces and antiques. A pair of tufted armchairs covered in grayish-blue silk with a pattern of lemon-yellow zinnias angle out from the fireplace; between them is an early-19th-century tilt-top cherry-and-maple table on a tripod base. The walls are cream. Built-in cabinets at one end of the long, narrow room make it feel less like a tunnel.

For the dining room, Hajj selected a Regency-style two-pedestal table, 10 George II-style dining chairs with seat cushions covered in hazelnut silk velvet, a George III breakfront bookcase and a George III mahogany sideboard. “To soften the room’s formality and to create a more romantic ambience, I introduced a delicate crystal chandelier and a Rococo gilt mirror I acquired in Parma, and a hand-embroidered linen tablecloth from Beirut,” says the designer, who was raised in Lebanon.

Hajj’s parents are in the textile business,



and she inherited her love of textiles from them. “When I’m stressed at work, I go into a room at my office I call the pillow room, where I keep a collection of textiles,” the designer says. “Some fragments date back to the 12th century.” The Turkish pillows on the window seat in the study, where the couple and their teenage sons

relax, are dark aubergine with hand-embroidered floral designs.

Hajj found a Louis XVI-style bed in Clignancourt for the master bedroom. Good removed the footboard and replicated its design, doubling the depth, in order to accommodate a 60-inch flat-screen television. “With a fireplace and a window on the wall opposite the bed, there was no room for a large TV,” he explains.

A crumbling porch on the side of the house was rebuilt and resurfaced, and a rotting Victorian gazebo at the near end of the pool was torn down. A new pavilion at the far end of the pool, more in keeping with the style of the house, now anchors the pool to the landscape.

“Wayne and Mona made our city home a much better place,” the owner says. “When we return from the Eastern Shore, we no longer feel we’re living in the stepchild.” □

