

COMING HOME

DESIGNER SUZANNE MANLOVE
INFUSES A TRADITIONAL BETHESDA
DWELLING WITH A MODERN VIBE

TEXT & STYLING BY CHARLOTTE SAFAVI
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT RADIFERA





Previous spread: An Arteriors light fixture adds sparkle to the living room, where a Lee Industries sofa and Charleston Forge cocktail table reside. Clockwise from top: A round mirror complements a linear console in the foyer. In the dining room, a Generation Lighting chandelier echoes the rectilinear Copeland table. Japanese-style prints by Tom Killion hang above a sideboard by CFC.



Buying and decorating a house while living overseas is a challenge in the best of times—let alone in the middle of a pandemic. Yet a couple residing in The Hague, where the husband worked for the State Department, did just that. They purchased a six-bedroom, 6,656-square-foot home in Bethesda and hired Arlington Home Interiors to whip it into shape before they returned home with their three children, ages four, eight and 11.

“Our client had only seen the house once before buying it,” recalls principal Suzanne Manlove, who orchestrated the entire design process virtually due to covid. “They put their complete trust in us while still living abroad. They wanted us to create the perfect home for their young family.”

Built in Craftsman style by Lawrence Cafritz Builders in 2006, the house boasted strong bones and a welcoming, transitionally styled kitchen. Manlove’s mandate was to revamp its traditional interiors to reflect the owners’ modern tastes and lifestyle while creating warm, inviting spaces for everyday living and casual entertaining. She collaborated with Rockville-based House to Home Solutions on a few minor upgrades, including a modernization of the family room fireplace. However, most of the changes she recommended were cosmetic, from updating kitchen hardware and switching out light fixtures to wallpapering. All the window treatments and paint colors are also new.

“When we begin a project, we ask homeowners to provide us with room images they’re attracted to and discuss why,” explains Manlove. “From this process, we saw that these clients favored calm, monochromatic spaces with subtle textures, woven materials and wood.” She and her team began with a soft palette of taupes, grays and blues; these form the backdrop for the open-plan living and dining rooms, where the walls and drapery are finished in those powdery gray-blue hues.

“Because the home’s architecture is traditional, we didn’t want to go too minimal or stark,” says the designer, who selected a combination of transitional and modern furnishings for the home. Classic yet clean-lined sofas and armchairs are finished in tactile, user-friendly fabrics. For example, the living room features a pair of curved-back Bernhardt chairs in performance velvet, detailed with nail-head trim.

“It’s the mixing of natural textures, metals and woods with the soft tonal palette that connects all the spaces and makes this home a welcoming, peaceful place to live in,” avers Manlove.

Accent colors turn brighter and more playful in the family

Interior Design: Suzanne Manlove, Arlington Home Interiors, Arlington, Virginia. Contractor: House to Home Solutions, Rockville, Maryland.



Clockwise from opposite, top: Manlove updated the kitchen and furnished the breakfast area with a table and chairs from Room & Board. The owners enjoy gatherings in comfort on the screened porch, populated by furnishings from West Elm. The family room received an infusion of contemporary style and vitality via built-ins accented in a fresh blue shade and a sleek new fireplace combining porcelain tile with a warm wood mantel. The chic ceiling fixture is from Dutton Brown.



SUZANNE MANLOVE'S
**TRADE
SECRETS**

What are ways to make a soft palette interesting? Texture, texture, texture! We mix loads of natural textural finishes, so rooms are never bland. Metals, shells, stone, woven materials and glass all complement neutrals beautifully. Wood adds warmth and depth.

How do you perk up existing architectural elements?

Depending on budget, we like to update the doors on built-ins; replace cabinet hardware; paint or wallpaper the backs of shelves or the insides of tray ceilings; and update or add crown molding. I am partial to a minimal cove molding but I look to a home's style to dictate my best options.

Design pet peeve? Chair rails! I think there was a time when builders put chair rails in every new build. I find that they can really break up the flow of a space.

Do you have a go-to paint color? Balboa Mist by Benjamin Moore is one of our favorites.

PORTRAIT: SARAH MARCELLA CREATIVE



“THE TRAY CEILING BECAME AN INTERESTING ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENT WHEN PAINTED SEAFOAM GREEN.” —SUZANNE MANLOVE



room, located just off the open kitchen and breakfast area. A wall of built-ins is embellished with shelf backs in a deeper shade of the blue found in the rooms at the front of the house. A large sectional occupies this cozy hub where the kids gather for homework and other activities. The couple “specifically requested a light, round cocktail table here that can be rolled away for dancing and gymnastics,” Manlove recounts. “All the furnishings are finished in family-friendly performance fabrics.” An adjacent screened porch reflects the same inviting, contemporary sensibility found in the interior spaces.

Achieving a sense of warmth in the large master bedroom proved to be a challenge. The designer used textured grass cloth “to cozy up the space while also imparting a hint of color and texture,” she explains. A bedframe of woven abaca serves as a focal point in the room while a striking drum chandelier and a pair of swivel armchairs adorned with a tone-on-tone medallion motif create further interest.

Manlove was also tasked with sourcing art for this room and others. She combined new pieces with original photographs and artworks collected by the owners during their travels—including

two Japanese-style prints above the sideboard in the dining room.

The finished project turned out to be just what the clients ordered—and the process went as smoothly as possible given the circumstances. “This was a large project and clear communication was definitely key,” Manlove relates. “We started with clients who weren’t living in the country, and at the same time our team was learning how to work remotely. But we pulled through and our clients got exactly what they wanted. We like to think we made a potentially stressful move more pleasant.” ■



In the owners’ bedroom (these pages), a Bernhardt bedstead crafted of woven abaca is flanked by Gat Creek tables and lamps by Regina Andrew. A brass-and-petrified-wood side table sits between Wesley Hall armchairs while a collection of black-and-white framed art adds a graphic touch to the Gat Creek wood dresser.

