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# Historic Uptown home gets vivacious makeover

Sue Strachan **DEC 7, 2017 - 6:00 PM**

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The rear stairwell descends directly into the kitchen. The bar stools are from Sotre and the pendant light fixture above the island is from Design Within Reach.

It was late February in New Orleans, about 70 degrees or so, when Catherine Newstadt Makk was walking in Audubon Park and asked herself, "Why am I not living here?"

In New York City's West Village, where Catherine lived with her daughter, Hannah, age 7, and their cat, Buttercup, the temperatures were hovering in the 30s and 40s at the time.

Catherine, a freelance marketing and research professional, had been in New Orleans seeking a change of pace and the chance to "do the things I've wanted to do." After 25 years in Manhattan working for Harper Collins and Conde Nast, she had decided it was time to move.

Once the decision was made, Catherine consulted with real estate agent Sarah Martzolf about what she wanted in a New Orleans house: "Uptown, near Audubon Park, high ceilings, good light, historically accurate features," then flew down to look at properties. They looked at four, and it was a Victorian residence -- not quite near Audubon Park, maybe a little too big, she thought, but in the Garden District -- that kept pulling her back. So, she bought it.

"I took a bigger leap than I thought I would with this house," said Catherine, who, along with her late husband, Andrew Makk, is a graduate of Tulane University.

She closed on the house June 1, and her interior designer Grace Kaynor and contractor Juan Pablo Montoya were at work on the property the next day.

"I didn't come to this with a special idea of what I wanted my house to look like," Catherine said, "and, neither did Grace," who was recommended to Catherine by friends and colleagues in New York and New Orleans. Grace, of Grace W. Kaynor Designs, also owns Sotre boutique on Magazine Street.

"We spent a lot of time talking," Catherine said. "What was really important to me was to use my own furniture and things rather than trying to fill a blank canvas."

"We don't want to decorate it too much," is what Catherine kept saying to Grace.

The result of that design collaboration will be on view Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 9-10, when the house will be one of seven properties featured on the Preservation Resource Center Holiday Home Tour presented by Regions Bank.

Before Catherine bought it, the house had undergone a renovation years earlier that included adding a third floor and extending the back of the property. That saved Catherine from having to modernize the wiring and plumbing, refinish floors or update the kitchen.

Without any of those major hassles, Catherine and Grace concentrated on transforming the interior design. Painting the rooms provided the first major change, focusing on shades of blue and white for the first floor -- Farrow and Ball Strong White for entrance, kitchen/family room and reading nook; Benjamin Moore Sleigh Bells 1480 for the living room; and Farrow and Ball Skylight for the second-floor master bedroom suite.

Grace also dialed up the drama in the dining room, painting the walls a custom lacquer color and finish and hanging a spectacular Wiener Werkstatte-style chandelier by Jonathan Adler. The result is a sexy and sophisticated lair for dinner parties and intimate conversations, but not too over the top for family entertaining.

Throughout the house Catherine and Grace integrated existing features into their design plan. When Catherine wanted to get rid of the curtains in the family room, Grace told her to keep them, basing the blue in them for the color used to repaint the kitchen cabinets and trim (Sherwin-Williams Delft). In the family room, they had the beams in the ceiling pickled, creating a light, airy Scandinavian feel.

On the second floor, in Hannah's room, the guest room and Catherine's 9- and 11-year-old nephews' room, they kept the existing wallpaper, using it to create or recreate a mood. In the nephews' room, for example, existing airplane wallpaper became a fun backdrop for red Chinese Chippendale twin headboards and rope pendant lights from Grace's Sotre boutique.

The biggest change on the second floor was the master bedroom suite, where Catherine's inner movie star comes out. "If I can't be a movie star, I can act (like) it," she said. "I love 'The Thin Man' movies."

First up, was switching the flow: the bedroom is now facing the street, where the home office originally was located, and a posh dressing room is where the original bedroom was.

The dressing room's focal point is a Norman Bel Geddes vanity, which wouldn't have been out of place in "The Women." The room's black and white palette adds to the glamorous aura. It also is in the hardware, light switches and bed linens that new and old are mixed in creative ways.

"Grace understands the understated nuances of a Victorian home," said Catherine, who pointed out that the downstairs Charleston Hardware from H. Rault Locksmiths is brass, which would have been popular in the Victorian era, while upstairs they used crystal and porcelain.

"I like to mix lots of periods and styles, they just need very tailored lines," said Grace, who earned a master's degree in decorative arts from the Cooper-Hewitt Institute. "You can pair an 18th-century mirror with Biedermeier or contemporary, you just know how to blend the lines together."

Much of the art throughout the house -- some purchased at Arthur Roger Gallery, Cole Pratt and Katie Koch Home -- has personal meaning; many pieces were wedding and anniversary gifts or family heirlooms. One special piece is a quilt made from the shirts of Catherine's late husband.

After moving to New Orleans Aug. 1, Catherine and Hannah have immersed themselves in the city. Hannah is a student at Louise S. McGehee School and "loves it;" Catherine, in addition to opening her doors for the PRC Holiday Home Tour, serves on the Newcomb College Institute Director's Advisory Council.

With the redesign of the house, now she enjoys opening it up for family and friends. "It's a great house, we use every room," she said.

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### **Preservation Resource Center Holiday Home Tour presented by Regions Bank**

**What:** Seven Garden District residences will be open for self-guided tours.

**When:** Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 9 and 10.

Tour, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; boutique, 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; Cafe, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

**Headquarters:** Trinity Episcopal Church, 1329 Jackson Ave.

**Tickets:** \$45, prcno.org.

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