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# Why downsize? Designer makes the move from condominium to home in style

Sue Strachan **MAY 30, 2018 - 11:00 AM**

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Detail of 1930s African stool in the garden room.

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Chad Graci had finally reached what turned out to be a defining moment for him in 2016: Stay in his 650-square-foot condominium in the Lower

Garden District and have a storage unit full of furniture, art and other items that he might one day use, or move to a house where he could fit everything and get rid of the storage unit.

The house won out. But it wasn't easy to find for this designer whose work has been featured in Architectural Digest and House Beautiful, among other publications.

"My realtor Clint LaCour and I looked for a year at a lot of houses all over town," Graci says. "The market was very aggressive at the time. I lost something like three houses because people were outbidding me, some with cash offers."

He finally found a home, built circa 1916, in Mid-City. Originally a double shotgun, it was in the process of being completely renovated and converted into a single when Graci purchased it.

Finding it before renovations were complete was great timing for Graci, as it allowed him to make changes before too much had been finalized. For example, the front door opens into the living room, and immediately to the right is a study, which was originally set to be a third bedroom.

"I knew I needed another public room," he said.

So he changed things up. What was supposed to be the bedroom closet was walled up and two bookcases were built with enough space for a pull-out couch in between them. Above each bookcase, he installed shell-shaped plaster niches that had moved from storage unit to storage unit for 15 years.

Across the room and just under the window is a desk where Graci likes to work in the morning before heading to his office at Graci Interiors. Baron, a rescue dog from Zeus' Place, often joins him at the desk.

The front room has also successfully been used for a friend's birthday party. Graci placed a tarot card reader in the room to make sure people mingled throughout the house and didn't all gather in the garden room in the back.

Other changes have been minor, but major in overall aesthetic. In the kitchen, he kept the cabinets but repainted them a different shade of white and replaced the hardware.

In the garden room, he added a set of French doors to match a pair already in the room and give the room symmetry. He also added built-in bookcases.

For the bedroom, he took an empty space and carved out an alcove for a dresser and mirror, as well as hidden closets for more storage (his main closet is off the master bathroom.)

The floors in two of the bathrooms (guest bathroom and powder room) started out as a traditional black and white square patterned tiling commonly used in old houses, but Graci replaced that tile with honed limestone and honed Carrara marble tiles.

The walls -- originally gray (Graci is not a fan of too much gray) -- have been painted in various Benjamin Moore and Farrow and Ball colors that act as neutral backdrops for his collection of furniture and art, a melding of styles and centuries of family heirlooms and new purchases. He has found pieces from auction houses and also at silent auctions, such as the Ogden Museum of Southern Art's Magnolia Ball. Graci is a co-chair for this year's Magnolia Ball, which will take place June 9.

Lucky finds are also part of the mix: a painting he found on the street in New York City is in his living room and his bedroom curtains were almost thrown out at a job site years ago. "They were in storage for something like 15 years," he said.

All Graci's treasures blend seamlessly and reflect his elegant but accessible design style.

"You can't be hemmed into a period," says Graci, a New Orleans native who before going out on his own worked for Michael Carbine, David Easton and the late Greg Jordan. "My design aesthetic is classic with an edge. I want rooms to feel curated and that they've evolved over time."

With his move to Mid-City, Graci has fit almost all of the items from his condo and storage unit into his 2,100-square-foot home, with some overflow going to his office and the rest going up in his attic.

Up next for the house: The backyard. Graci has already drawn up plans for a new deck and a parterre garden.

*Correction: The original story said Grace was an interior designer. He is not, he is a designer.*

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