

# Southern Accents

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**M**elissa Allen's idea of a dream house was not too far removed from the one in which she grew up—French in style, with lots of rustic beams and weathered stucco.

Lucky for her, she and her husband, Craig, found the perfect setting for such a house on a wooded hill in Atlanta just a few miles from her childhood home. Although the existing late '70s board-and-batten house

was big enough for the couple, their toddler son, and a daughter on the way, they knew it needed an update that would incorporate the French flair Melissa envisioned.

"Some people probably wouldn't have renovated," Melissa says, "but I love French style so much. Plus, you couldn't really enjoy the views, so we decided to open it all up."

As Atlanta residential designer Yong Pak began an 18-month renovation, Melissa set out to plan the décor. But several months into the



project, she decided it was all too much and sought help. Her mother suggested that she turn to Atlanta designer Dan Carithers, a decision Melissa now credits as one of her best. "I loved Dan instantly," she says. "He just made it happen."

The designer says it didn't take long for him to realize he had a client who knew precisely what she wanted: a refined, dressy look—but one that would accommodate the practical needs of young parents.

What gave it away so soon? Maybe

it was the fact that Melissa, eight months pregnant at move-in, used the family room's French farm table for changing 1-year-old Benjamin's diapers. Charming as it was, that image taught the veteran designer that this job was all about grand and elegant meets intimate and livable.

What initially drew Atlanta natives Melissa and Craig—who were high school sweethearts—to the house was its five-acre setting. Tucked in the woods along a winding drive in Buckhead, the house is shrouded





from the street by century-old oaks. A visitor from France would later dub the place *Maison des Bois*, or "house of the woods." Yet the house didn't do justice to its setting.

In addition to replacing the small dormered half-story with an expansive second floor, Pak also enlarged the master suite and added a fireplace. Standard-size windows were replaced with larger ones, including French casement windows, which open to allow the family to take in the wooded surroundings.

Six months into the project, the Allens decided to gut the kitchen

and enclose an adjoining screened porch to form a sitting room. To reinforce the Provençal feel, Pak set raised fireplaces against angled walls in both rooms. "In winter, we literally have a fire going in the kitchen every morning," Melissa says.

Pak turned to Atlanta antiques dealer Bo Childs for reclaimed vintage ceiling beams, limestone mantels, and old French oak for the bookcases. In the family room, he flanked the fireplace with niches above a pair of doors. One pair leads to the adjacent room; the other hides the television. The room's soaring



ceiling makes for an effective contrast with the adjacent dining room's lower one. "The two rooms play off each other—one space is grand, the other more intimate," says Carithers.

The juxtaposition is one of many the designer strikes throughout the interior. Distressed walls in the dining room provide a perfect backdrop for the smooth texture of Melissa's creamware collection. In the master bedroom, simple cottons play off rich silks to create a practical yet elegant feel. And in the family room,

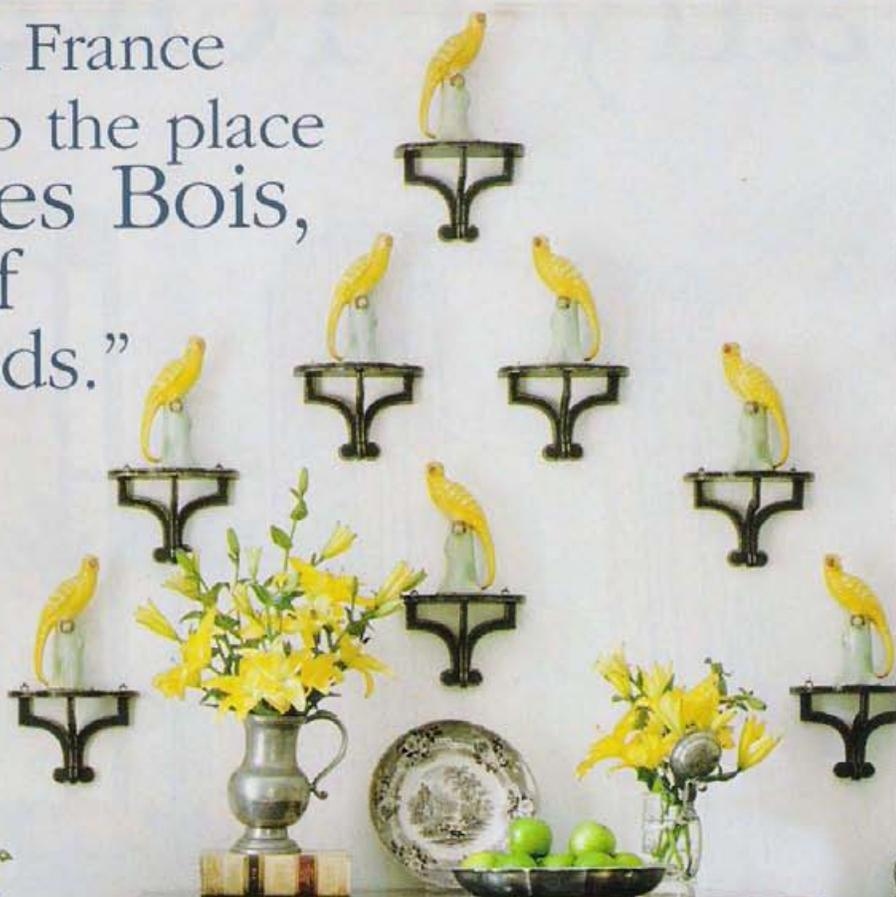
the sofas are upholstered in soft chenille, and an iron fireplace screen is mounted on castors so that it can be easily rolled out of the way.

"It's a great example of how to make a family room truly that. The fabrics, the fireplace, the toys—it all works with how they live in the house and enjoy it," Carithers says.

But that doesn't mean style has to take a backseat to comfort. "The more this house is lived in," Melissa says, "the better it looks." ♦

*For details, see Sourcebook, page 207.*

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Yellow bird figurines displayed in a pyramid over a chest in the living room create an eye-catching focal point. RIGHT: The Provençal-style house is surrounded by five acres of hardwoods. Atlanta residential designer Yong Pak reworked the mundane former entry to establish a formal French courtyard.

# ally Provençal



Neutrals dominate the living room, where chairs are covered in shades of brown, cream, gray, and yellow. LEFT: The front door, with its iron grillwork, and stone floors extend a warm French-style welcome.



ABOVE: Benjamin, 5, and Mary Elaine, 3, have stashes of toys throughout the house, especially in the family room. LEFT: In the kitchen, refrigerator drawers disguised as cabinetry complement the home's French-style architecture. RIGHT: The kitchen flows into a family eating area and sitting room. Blue-and-cream checked fabric covers the chairs and barstools. Old painted ceiling boards give the kitchen an aged look.

# Practic



For a young Atlanta family,  
Dan Carithers and Yong Pak infuse an  
elegant home with French accents



Blue and beige dominate the master bedroom. A cotton check covers the upholstered headboard, a casual complement to the striped silk draperies. French doors open to the terrace. LEFT: A limestone mantel makes the room feel inviting and livable. The ottoman sports the same pattern as the headboard.





Reclaimed vintage beams and a limestone fireplace give the family room a European feel. A round niche tops a pair of doors hiding a television. Toile and chenille upholstery create a quiet softness, while a framed 1850 tapestry and an iron screen add drama to the space. RIGHT: Bookcases in the family room provide both display space for collectibles and storage for books. Enclosing some shelves with glass doors and leaving others open gives the unit a furniturelike quality.



In the dining room, an 18th-century hand-painted chest and an Italian mirror balance the space. LEFT: Dining room panels, hand-painted by North Carolina artist Kevin Rutan, are distressed to give the walls an aged look. Pieces of creamware accent the walls.