

TRIANGLE URBAN

# HOME

CELEBRATING INSPIRATIONAL DESIGN AND PERSONAL STYLE

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# SOUTHERN *charm*

By Anne Marie Ashley  
Photography by Tim Buchman

WHEN DESIGNER AMY VERMILLION'S client, Gilbert Galle, made the move from his home in Charleston, South Carolina, her design services traveled with him. After looking at a few homes, Gilbert settled on a beautiful historic home in the sought-after Battery neighborhood of the Charleston harbor. A survivor of Hurricane Hugo, the Civil War and the Great Earthquake, the southern charmer of a home had an idyllic courtyard and off-street parking behind a gate – a true rarity in Charleston. "Although it was in beautiful shape, it was the victim of several unfortunate kitchen and master bathroom renovations," says Amy. "Also the floors and walls had shifted over time and there was a slight 'fun house' effect in certain hallways. You could roll a golf ball through the hall and it would immediately go to the wall."

With the help of legendary Charleston contractor, Harper Finucan, the team corrected the slanting hallways by painstakingly removing doorways and moldings and working behind the

walls and underneath the house. "It was totally fascinating to see the original plaster and lathe construction from 1854," adds Amy. An old elevator shaft in the home was turned into an alcove for Gilbert's wine refrigerator and because kitchens in historical homes are notoriously smaller and less functional, they renovated the kitchen to make it ideal for cooking and entertaining.

"The master bathroom was the biggest challenge," says Amy. The jack-and-jill style bathroom had a space for laundry and a closet that wasn't quite usable. "The chopped up layout was reminiscent of a budget hotel." The team gutted it down to the original brick walls. "I drew out what I wanted for my client and then Harper and I would confer after each stage of demo," explains Amy. "We had to make some changes along the way but for the most part, my plan was able to be executed." The his-and-her sinks were separated by a mirror that goes all the way to the ceiling with an open vanity on either side. "This allowed for maximum counter space but also gave the bathroom an open





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feeling that was lacking prior to our renovation,” explains Amy. They also added a large window over the tub for light and reconfigured the shower.

The overall design plan was to marry the old Charleston architectural features of Gilbert’s home with his current art collection and newer pieces. With a mixture of antique family pieces and new items, the team combined found-pieces in Charleston to create a harmonious aesthetic. In nine months, the design and renovation was complete. “I think good design comes from a client’s personal collections, photographs — whatever they have that’s distinctively theirs,” says Amy. “It’s not a home if it looks like a model.”

“I think the most important attribute of a great designer is that they must know and understand their client,” offers Gilbert. “My style is a mixture of traditional and modern which is tricky to pull off tastefully, but Amy does it well.” Gilbert adds that his mother was a true influence in his traditional taste in design and the modern side has developed over the years. “Through Amy’s guidance, I’ve been able to incorporate both over the years.”

When asked what his favorite room in the Charleston home is, Gilbert easily answers that it’s the library. “Aside from my art collection, my books are very special to me – they are like good friends!” ♦

