

TRIANGLE URBAN

# HOME

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CELEBRATING INSPIRATIONAL DESIGN AND PERSONAL STYLE





# Higher Ground

By Laura Jackson  
John Bessler Photography

*If its historic walls could talk, just imagine the tales they could tell. Interior designer Heather Garrett's dreamy loft sits in what was originally a warehouse built in 1926 by Liggett & Myers Tobacco Company.*

**S**ITUATED IN A DYNAMIC, WALK-ABLE community in the geographic soul of downtown Durham, this building is on the National Register of Historic Places as one of the area's last tobacco drying facilities.

When she bought her unit, it had not been updated since the initial conversion of the building into condos

20 years earlier. Beginning with only one bedroom and another small "sleeping loft" up a very steep ladder, there was a large list to accomplish. But oozing with charm and possibility, its gorgeous 21-foot ceilings left plenty of room to add a second floor and modern updates.

Working with Kennedy Building Company of Hillsborough, BLOK Architecture of Durham and her own amazing design

staff at Heather Garrett Interior Design, she was able to develop the plans and construction drawings right in her office, creating a livable and elegant design. Now with four bedrooms and two bathrooms, Garrett explains, “We literally made use of every square inch!”

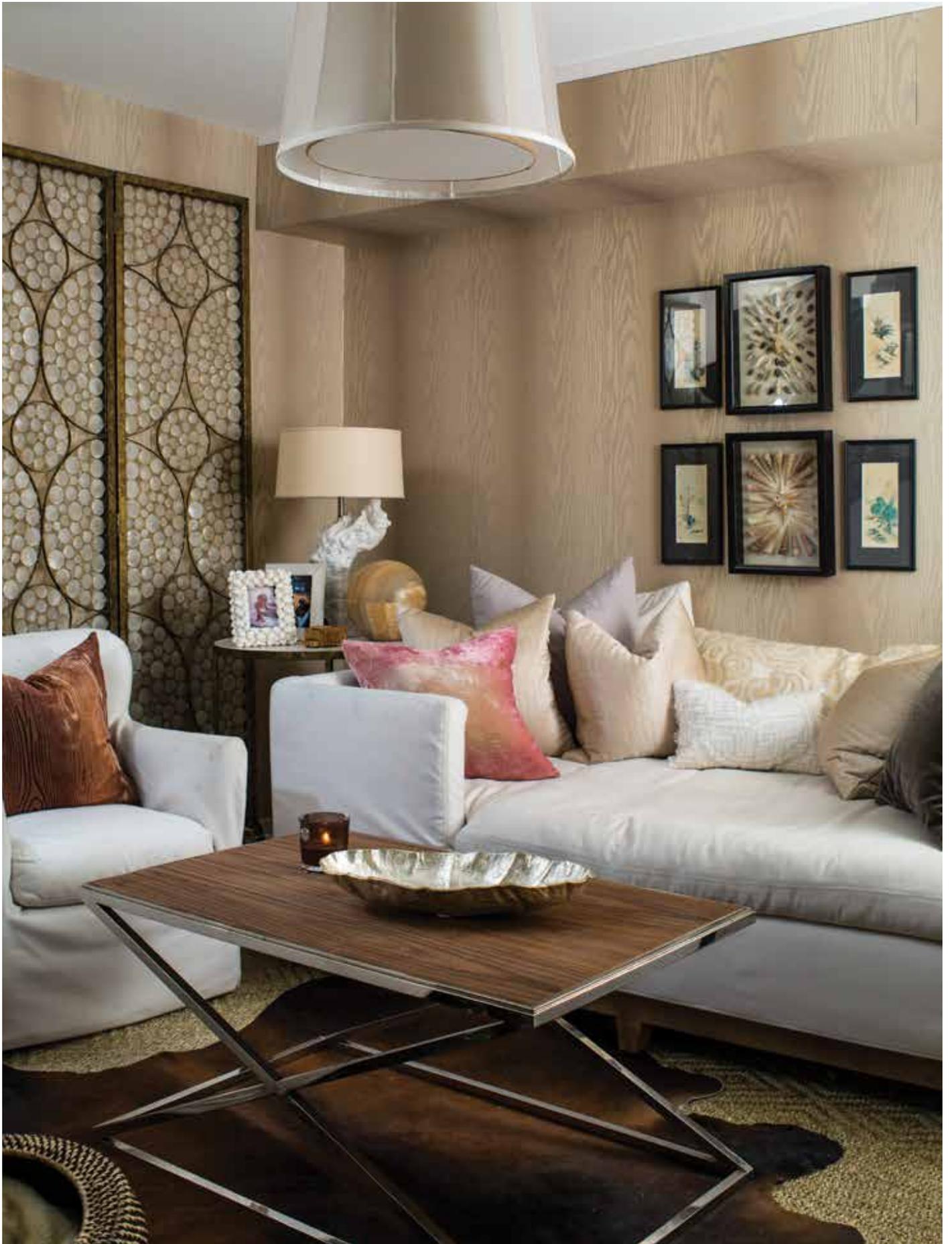
A stunning contemporary floating staircase featuring vintage tobacco wood now leads to a new second living floor space with two kids’ rooms and a cozy family/guest room. She then divided the first floor space, carving out a master bedroom, inviting living space, and a fantastic open kitchen.

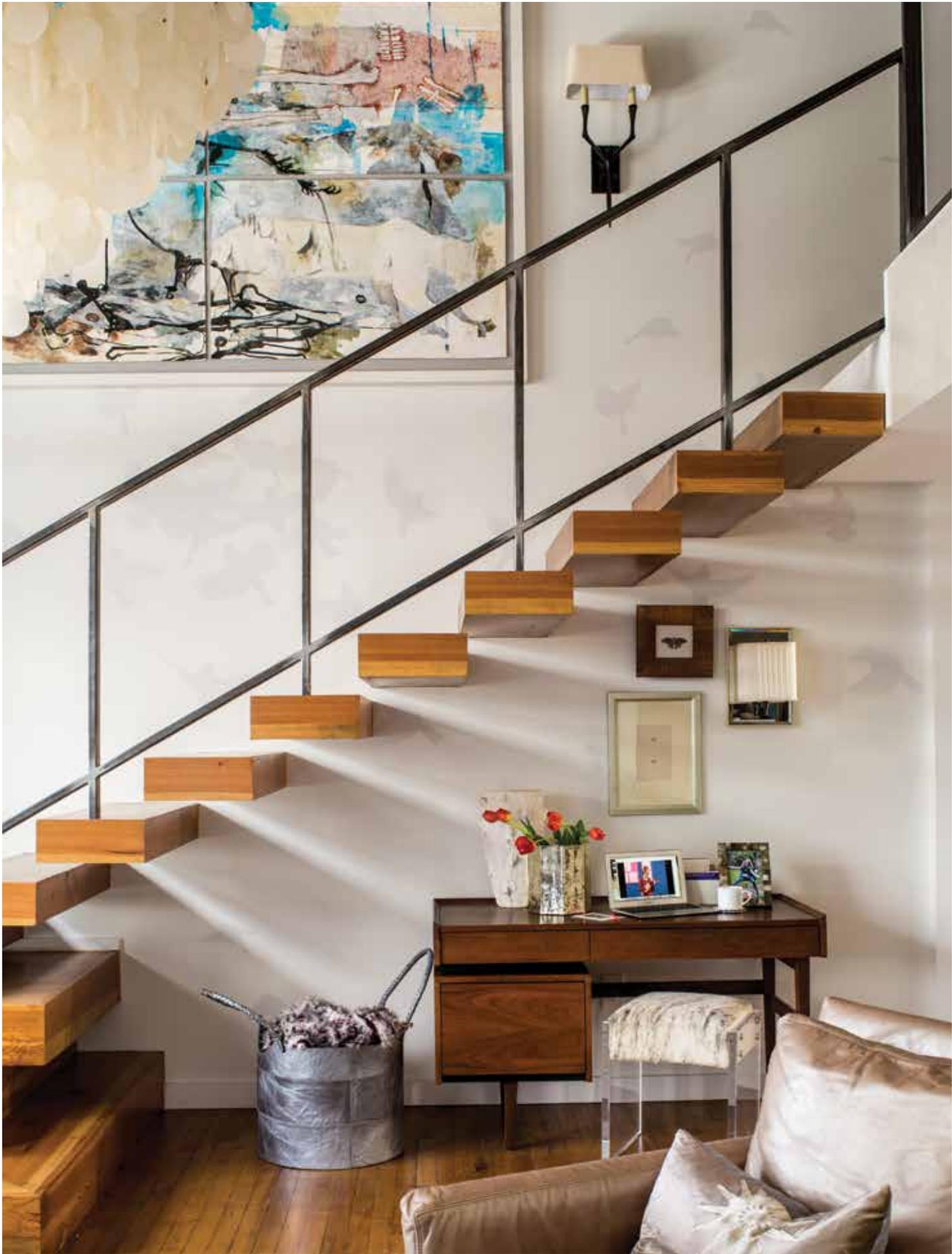
Throughout the home, alluring warmth and texture seamlessly blend both modern and traditional design elements. In the living room, a vintage ladder draws your eye to the magnificent height of the room, as does an immense antique full-length French mirror. Contemporary lighting and art pieces add even more to the visual feast.

“I do a lot of experimenting in my own home,” said Garrett. “It’s a functionality incubator, where I can discover what works (and doesn’t) before trying it out on clients.”

*“I believe that if a client is going to feel at ease in their new space, it’s important to be realistic. That means taking a snapshot of life as it is today, and designing around it.”*





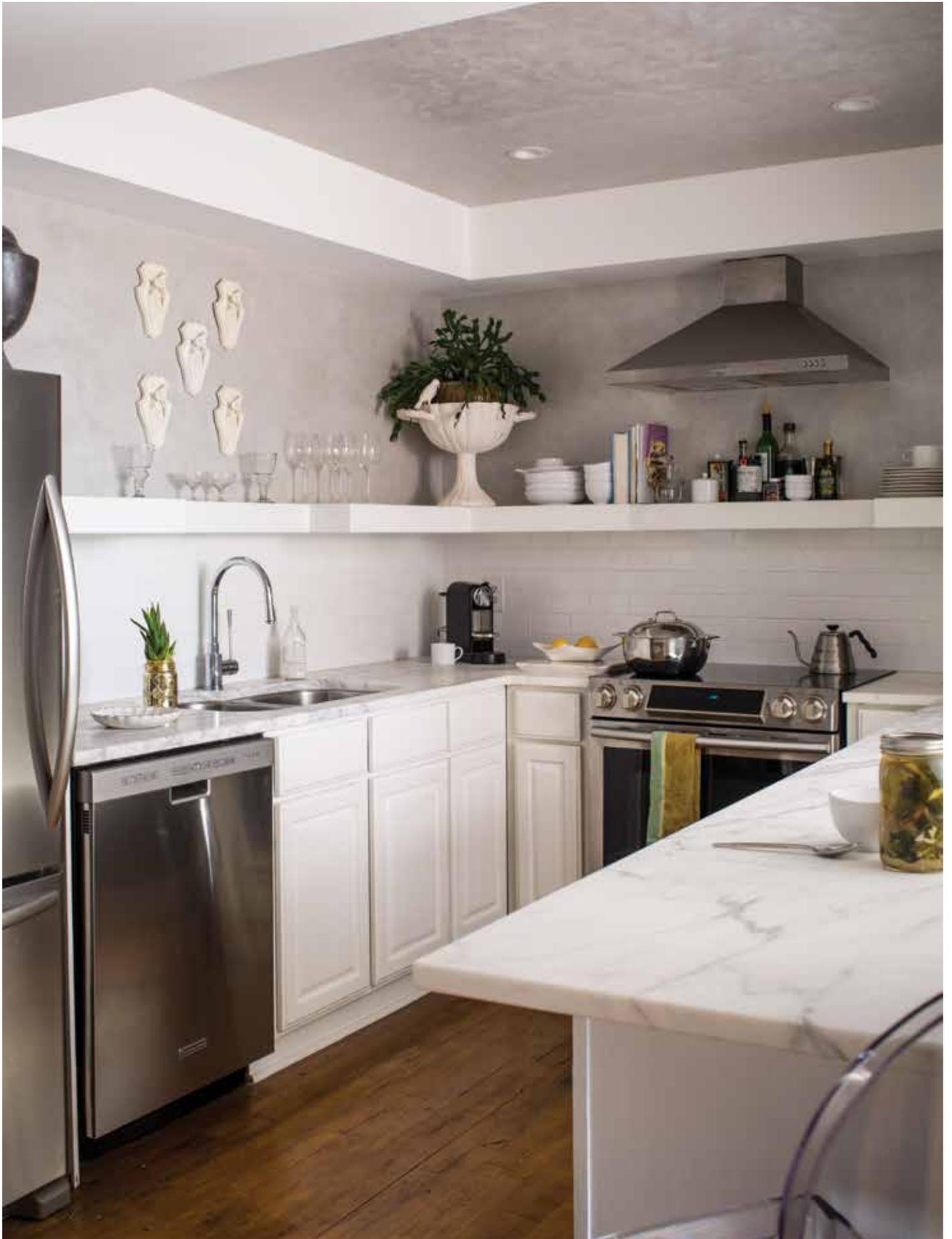




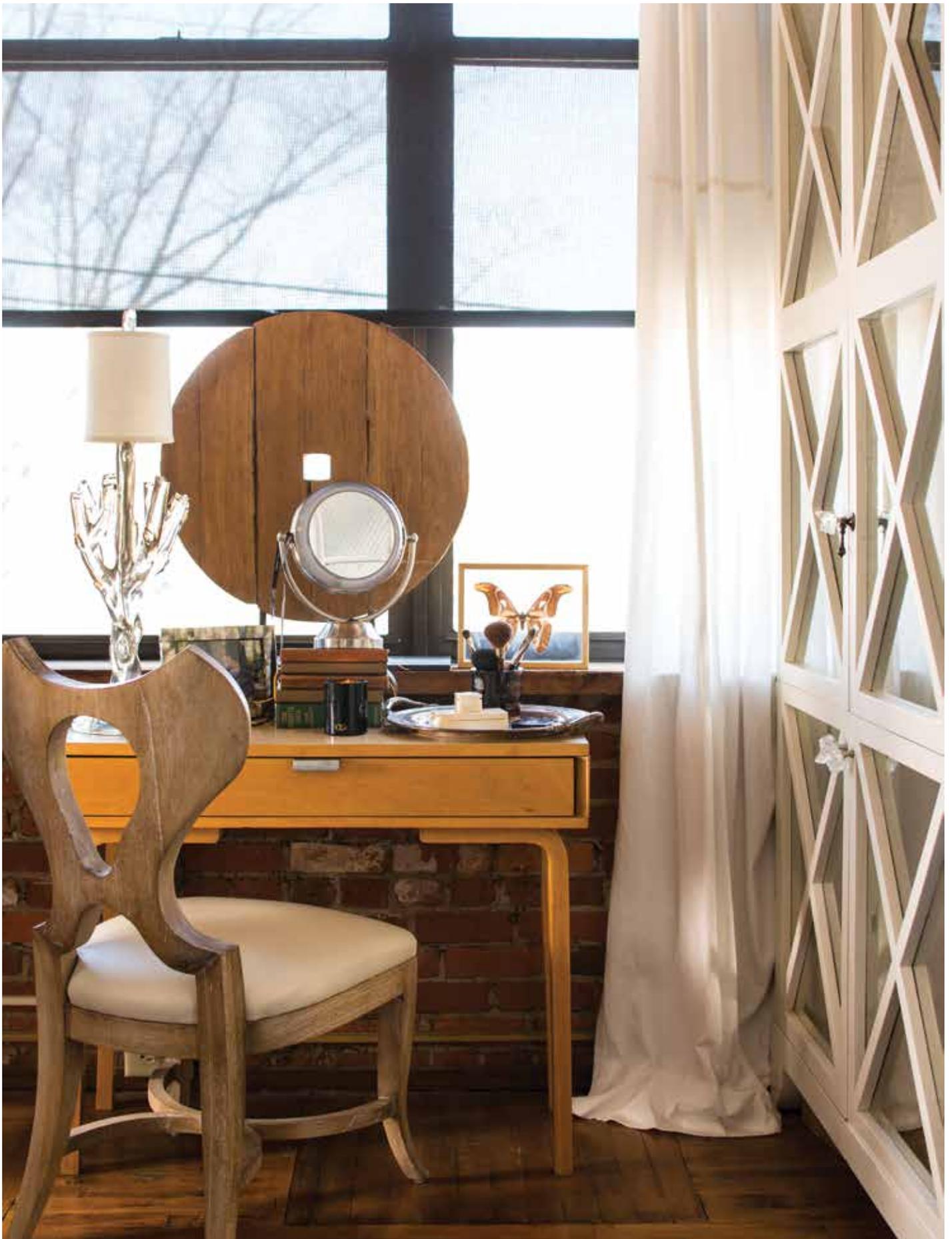
A woman of many talents and a seemingly unending source of creative inspiration, Garrett designed the engaging wallpaper in her entry from her own charcoal figure drawings, then found a company in Los Angeles to produce it. She scaled her figures to not-quite-life-size and then swapped the charcoal for gold foil for an enchanting effect. The future result of this experiment was

the beginning of a successful collection of custom murals made to color and scale for clients.

The full-scale renovation of her home took about six months, but she explains that it's always changing a little bit. "When the kids were little, we called it the 'crazy furniture-change-around-house'. Now they've just accepted the visual revolving door."









Heather says that her most important style influence is family. “I live with two teenagers and a hairy cat, so I’m familiar with the need for resilient furniture among other livable design elements. I believe that if a client is going to feel at ease in their new space, it’s important to be realistic. That means taking a snapshot of life as it is today, and designing around it.”

Garrett goes on to say that her surroundings really have an impact on her mood. “Over the years, I’ve discovered a great deal about the way lighting and a well-planned space can impact mood and contribute to well-being.”

Garrett believes that at any given time in life, there are a few pieces that feel important enough to frame a design around. She’s found the same is true for many of her clients, saying that

when she grounds the project in items with meaning, the whole thing takes off in a different direction.

“A large painting by my college roommate and a pair of antique warehouse doors were determining factors for the design of my living room, so I filled in the blanks with a mix of pieces. And I had to try out an acid-washed linen sofa...I was curious!” Incidentally, that sofa became her favorite piece of furniture in her favorite room. According to Garrett, It’s more like a “feather sleeping bag with a back”.

“I lounge and read, curl up with a friend and a glass of wine. Or just drink my morning coffee and gaze out the soaring 12-foot-high windows at the 80-year-old oak trees lining Duke Street.”◆

