

TRIANGLE URBAN

HOME

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CELEBRATING INSPIRATIONAL DESIGN AND PERSONAL STYLE



magnificent COMFORT

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New View Photography





It was a combination of childhood nostalgia and the pull of a Southern metropolis that drew the Mehr family from their London flat to their current abode, a magnificent yet comfortable residence in Raleigh.

The family's transatlantic move brought them back to the town the Mehrs grew up in. Despite the potential headaches associated with such a momentous relocation, designers Donna Davis and Elizabeth Allran Whitley (Liz) of Design Works Studio made the transition a seamless one – and melded forward-thinking ideas with a mastery of color to produce endless possibilities of décor.

Theirs is a partnership built on ingenuity and shared experiences. Both Donna and Liz are from Hickory, Furniture Capital of the South, both earned degrees from Eastern Carolina University, and both were up to the task of creating the Mehr family's dream home within a tight timeframe.

Donna handled the remodeling, while Liz tackled floor-to-ceiling furnishings and decor. The family brought over a few sentimental pieces from the U.K., which gave the designers a sense of their style, but otherwise the home was a virtual clean slate. Together, Donna and Liz successfully completed what would become a massive project, spanning



10,000-square-feet, for an active family with three children, a dog and a distinctive style that goes far beyond what one might see on *Downton Abbey*.

“During our first walk-through of the home with Mrs. Mehr, she placed a big emphasis on simplicity, comfort and function for her family,” recalls Liz. “From the start, she had complete trust in our vision, which was instrumental in developing and completing a cohesive design in a relatively short period of time.”

The color palette served as a springboard for the design vision, introducing intriguing splashes of indigo, navy, orange and emerald.

“Mrs. Mehr was very passionate about blue, so I focused on bringing in other colors that worked well with [it],” says Liz. “I kept this color palette consistent throughout the main level of the house, using a set of different neutrals in each room to avoid a repetitive look.”

An established painter with a fine arts background, Liz places particular emphasis on color development in design. This instinctive creativity also played into her success











in finding unique, high-end furnishings and artwork. While she utilized designer trade accounts, Liz also prowled through antique marts and auctions from the North Carolina mountains to the coast, finding a treasure trove of accessories, including the brilliantly hued books that fill the living room's bookcases and make this space a welcoming retreat.

Like most families, the Mehrs spend most of their time in the Family Room, referring to it as their favorite place within the house. A study in elegant simplicity, the family room has a soothing color scheme set off by the clean white lines of the mantle and the vibrant blue rug that anchors it. Sunlight fills the space from the back wall of windows, inviting visitors to sink into the sectional and enjoy the ambiance. Mrs. Mehr cites her daughter's Craft Room as another favorite, with its eye-catching colors, bright knitting needles and arguably funky vibe.

Speaking of funky, Liz believes in bending the rules. "I don't have a design secret per se," she says, "but I do have a rule that 'there are no rules of right and wrong' in design. I think it's very important to focus on what works best for your situation, verses what a design show tells you is right and wrong."

In terms of the Mehrs' situation, within a year, their new home was remodeled, furnished and fully accessorized. From the time they left England until they arrived in Raleigh, it was as if they traveled on a cool ocean breeze.◆