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Gallery Crawl:
A tour of local exhibitions

Inside the home of artist Stephen Wilson

Farrow & Ball pink paint is the perfect choice for this bright and airy sunroom with exposed brick and dark tile floors. ABC Carpet & Home floor covering keeps the space warm and inviting, while a vintage bar cart from Slate Interiors and an original Stephen Wilson skull sculpture welcome guests to come and sit a spell. Custom gold Barcelona chairs flank each sitting area, creating symmetrical, yet unique nooks.



Home is Where the Art Is

A Plaza Midwood home is alive with art, love, and a passion for Charlotte.

By Anne Marie Ashley
Photography by Dustin Peck







About her home, someone once asked Aundrea Wilson, “Why do you need all this stuff?” “Why?” She replied, “because your home is the place you retire to; it’s where you entertain friends and family. Opening your home to someone is one of the most gracious things you can offer, so why not fill it with things that make you and your guests feel at home, at ease, and happy?” This is, perhaps, the most telling response about Aundrea and her husband, artist Stephen Wilson. Not only is their home wonderfully surprising and interestingly designed, but it’s also warm, welcoming, and completely personal.

Having lived in several parts of Charlotte proper—including Dilworth, Uptown, and Eastover—Stephen, Aundrea, and their young daughter, Wren were looking for a change of pace and discovered their new home in Plaza Midwood. “I must admit, it was not love at first sight for me, but for my husband, it was,” Aundrea explains. “I was discouraged by the small closets and bathrooms, but my husband had a vision for a fun and inviting home to entertain in. He said, ‘Once we fill the walls with art, that’s all we’ll need.’”

The home was in good condition with high ceilings and original moldings and floors. But a renovation in 2010 still left the home feeling traditional and dated. The couple got straight to work creating a space that fits perfectly with their lifestyle. “We are fans of mid-century modern style, so most of our furniture and many accessories were purchased through Jim Levesque at Design Within Reach in Charlotte,” Stephen says. In addition to the great bones, one of the reasons Stephen, and ultimately Aundrea, were drawn to the home is that it made an ideal showplace for artwork. Avid collectors, the pair knew that the big gallery walls and abundance of natural light would be an exceptional backdrop for their collection.

Irina Toshkova from The New Gallery of Modern Art in Charlotte pulled up with a truckload of art for Stephen and Aundrea to try. “Irina is our art advisor. If anyone is looking to begin an art collection, I highly recommend creating a relationship with a local gallery,” Aundrea explains. “They are happy to loan pieces you can live with in your home for a few days, helping you figure out which artwork you can’t live without.” And that is exactly what they did. A dizzying mix of contemporary art from artists like Hunt Slonem, Damien Hirst, and Jeff Koons adorn their walls, while Andy Warhol, Mel Bochner, and Ryan McGinniss make appearances here and there.

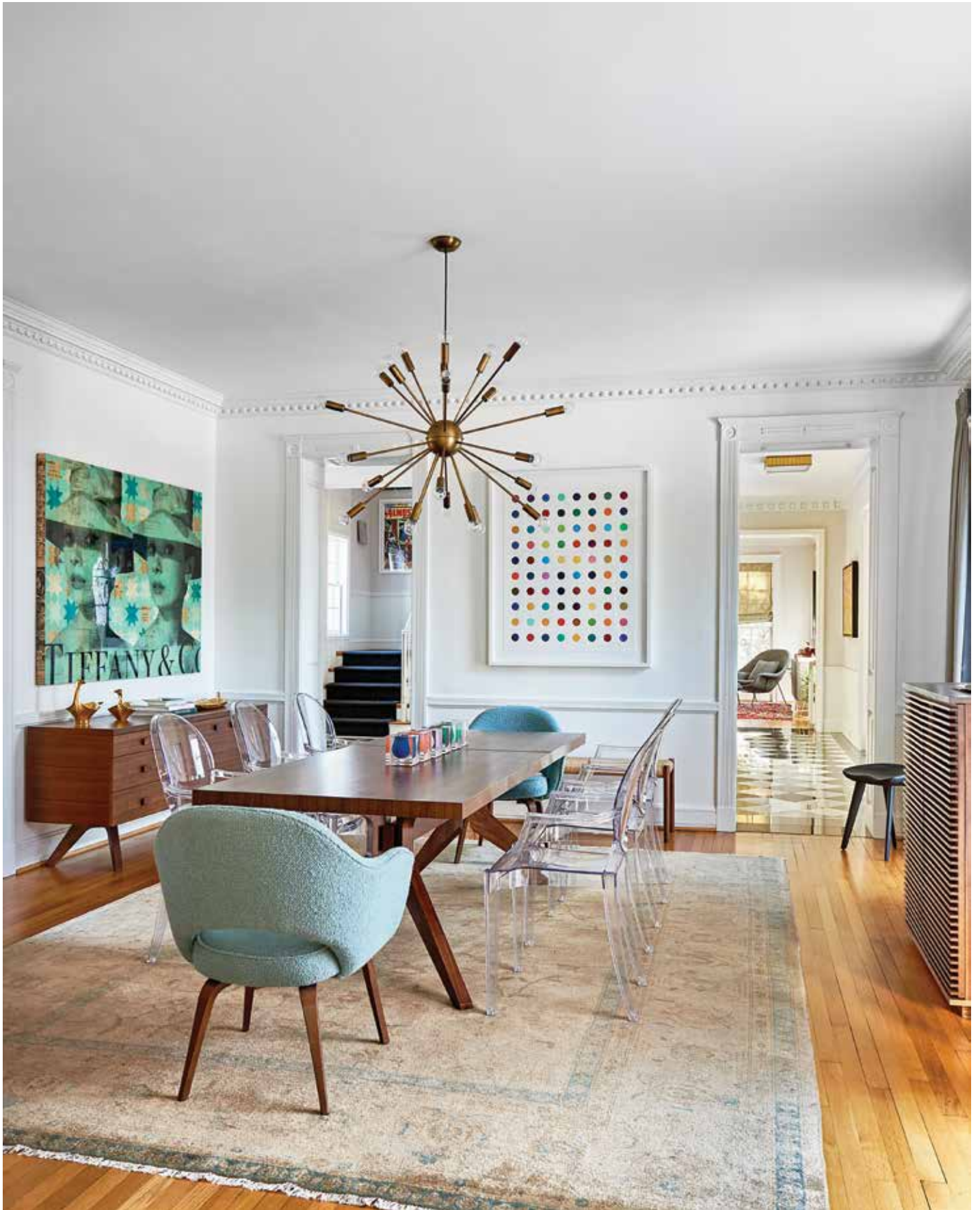
Aundrea Wilson and daughter, Wren, incorporate the stairwell gallery into their daily ritual, speaking to many of the artwork as they descend. “Blah Blah Blah,” Wren says to an original Mel Bochner piece. The “Cabinet of Curiosity” is an original Stephen Wilson sculpture – a bold blue curio cabinet adorned with curious butterflies – and was created specially for the Coral Springs Museum of Art.



An original Ryan McGinness lithograph, one of only ten in the world, hangs above a Design Within Reach sofa. Stephen Wilson chose the hot pink rug from ABC Carpet & Home to perfectly complement the piece. A Platner coffee table from Knoll, accented by a tray from B.D. Jeffries and custom torso sculptures from Rainer Lagemann round out the cozy living room. The beige Brunello Cucinelli throw warms the space.



Balloon animal art signed and numbered by artist Jeff Koons hangs high in the dining room and promises to "send Wren to college," Aundra Wilson says. An original butterfly installation by Stephen Wilson, on the other hand, promises more color.



A mid-century modern dining room showcases dot art from Damien Hirst and a Robert Mars Tiffany & Co. piece. Saarien end chairs cap a warm wooden dining table from Design Within Reach with Lucite chairs surrounding. A rug from Stark Carpet anchors the room.



“The lithograph by Ryan McGiniss fills the space above the couch in the living room so perfectly,” Aundrea says. “It’s one of only ten in the world – a view of his whole studio.”

While Aundrea loves decorating and accessorizing their home, pulling from local shops and showrooms like Slate Interiors, B.D. Jeffries, and Stark, she admits that it’s Stephen who takes it to the next level. The Ryan McGiniss lithograph, for example, was originally paired with a beige rug in the living room, which Aundrea picked out. But after purchasing the hot pink rug from ABC Carpet & Home in New York that Stephen felt would be the perfect complement, the room came together in a whole new

way. A self-proclaimed conservative, Aundrea says that Stephen pushes her to think outside the box. “Recently, we purchased a Marcus Kenney deer head and hung it in our sunroom, which was purple at the time. Stephen came in and suggested candy pink walls. And I was skeptical, but now that deer head really pops and is the perfect showcase for it.”

The Farrow & Ball pink-painted sunroom is a favorite hangout for Stephen and Aundrea and their daughter, Wren. Book-lined walls and beautiful views of their backyard and pool lend plenty of conversation and relaxation. Wren has her own shelf of books, including her first art book, *What is Contemporary Art?* A



Guide for Kids, from which she grabs a book and sits down to “ooh” and ahh” as she reads. “There’s nothing more enjoyable than sitting in the sunroom in the morning with a cup of coffee, looking out at our trees and flowerbeds,” Stephen says. “It makes life much happier.”

The art displays aren’t limited to just the inside of the home. In the front yard, two giraffe sculptures from an old circus in Paris mark the spot where an old oak tree had to be torn down. In the backyard, a Shaun Cassidy sculpture holds court by the pool. Every inch of the home, inside and out, is thoughtfully curated and lovingly maintained. “We don’t feel that a home is ever done,” Stephen explains. “The constant evolution of a house is what keeps it exciting.”

Left: An original piece from UNC-Charlotte art teacher Maja Godlewska hangs on the far wall of the master bedroom, and Stephen Wilson Marilyn Monroe art inspired by Andy Warhol adds perfect pops of color. Floor covering from Stark Carpet and an orange Hermes throw create warmth, while a chandelier from Design Within Reach adds a contemporary punch.

Right: Original flooring in the master bath pairs beautifully with the antique Chinese cabinet Aundrea Wilson selected to house towels, perfumes, and accessories.



Top: The home called The Belvedere, was built in 1951 as the residence of homebuilding entrepreneur John Crosland. The revivalist themes were designed by local Charlotte draftsman Warren Mobley to complement the nearby country club building. Crosland is credited with introducing the ranch style home to Charlotte, and his some 6,500 homes have helped reshape suburban Charlotte. Two giraffe sculptures, originally from a circus installation in Paris, mark the spot where an old oak tree once stood before it had to be removed.

Bottom: The catalyst for pink walls, the original deer head from Savannah artist Marcus Kenney anchors one side of the sunroom. The tufted blue velvet sofa from ABC Carpet & Home sits pretty, and a round sphere coffee table from Restoration Hardware offers a perfect seat for some of the Wilsons' very favorite books from SOCO Gallery.



This moody powder room pays perfect homage to Prince with artwork by William Goodman backed by black Ralph Lauren damask wallcoverings.





Original bunny artwork from artist Hunt Slonem hangs in the hallway and original black-and-white tile floors provide the perfect complement. “We started with just one, but like bunnies, they multiplied quickly,” Aundrea Wilson says.

Aundrea adds that it’s the home and its abundance of character that has made them eclectic and interesting. “When you have a grand staircase, one picture just won’t do – it looks lonely. So, we’ve filled the walls with interesting art. And now my husband and I adore coming down that staircase with Wren every morning saying “hello” to Moo Cow and “blah blah blah” to Mr. Bochner.”

Though the home is ever changing with new pieces, new colors, and new arrangements, the core design plan remains intact – decorate only with what you love. A collection of art and fashion books, co-curated with Annemarie Weekley from SOCO Gallery, can be found in corners, on tables, and in shelves. Stephen’s iconic skull and butterfly artwork play peek-a-boo among the galleries, while furniture and accessories from perennial favorites like ABC Carpet & Home, Gucci, Design Within Reach, and Slate Interiors punctuate the rooms with warmth. It’s no wonder, then, that the Wilson home has played host to numerous charity events, vernissages, and fundraisers for local organizations like Charlotte Home Society, Opera Coffee, and Art Talks – to name a few.

“A home should feel both relaxing and alive at the same time,” Stephen says. That is exactly the vibe they’ve got going, much like their neighborhood. With its rich history and funky vibe, the Wilsons have found a true home in Plaza Midwood. Their art collection, like them, is extensive but unpretentious. From a thirty-dollar Coco Chanel painting they purchased on the streets of New York to Stephen’s artwork to dining room art worth thousands – the thing that makes them most valuable is that they were all collected with love. ♦