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# INTERVIEW

GALLERY OWNER KATHARINE HIDELL THOMAS CREATES A HOME THAT PERFECTLY BALANCES THE SOPHISTICATION YOU'D EXPECT WITH THE WARMTH OF LAYERS OF A LIFE WELL-CHERISHED.

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Inherited furniture from her grandparents, designed by famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright for Heritage, makes the living room an extra special place for Thomas. Shortly after the renovation, Thomas enlisted friend and designer Holly Phillips from The English Room to help pull the space together. A colorful Herb Jackson piece hangs over the sofa.

A soft sculpture by Stephanie Patton warms the room with a sweet sentiment and takes center stage above the fireplace. A hide ottoman from Darnell & Company finds the perfect spot in front of the curved sofa designed by Frank Lloyd Wright for Heritage. An abstract by Page Davis hangs just above. **OPPOSITE:** Katharine Hidell Thomas, co-owner of Hidell Brooks Gallery, sits beneath a piece by Herb Jackson.





ONE COULD SAY THAT KATHARINE HIDE LL THOMAS, part-owner of Hidell Brooks Gallery, was a child of art and architecture. Growing up in a modern home on Museum Drive in Charlotte, Thomas' mother regaled her with stories of her grandparents' home in Grover. A modern marvel for the small town, the home was built in the style of Frank Lloyd Wright, and people drove from miles away to see the 5,000-square-foot ranch with views of the lake spanning the front of the home through the back. Midcentury lines

and expansive windows framed Thomas' mind for what makes a home beautiful.

"It was not of its time," Thomas says of her grandparents' home, as she speaks about what drew her to her own. "I have always been drawn to light and openness. When I first stepped into my home in the late '90s, it had abundant windows, an expansive yard, and hallways spanning the home; I knew this house was meant for me." Built by architect Arthur Gould Odell Jr. in 1951, the red brick ranch had





low ceilings but an open floor plan and large windows that marked the beauty for which Thomas had been looking.

Almost ten years later, married and with two children, Thomas hired high school friend Matt Benson of Meyer Greeson Paullin Benson to reimagine the layout of the home. “We both saw the benefits of creating a minimal and quiet background for the objects Katharine would display,” explains Benson of the renovation. “By focusing on natural light and clean detailing, the house became a framework for displaying art. It started with Katharine’s grandparents’ sofa and chairs by Frank Lloyd Wright. Modern and subtly textured with geometric designs, they themselves are art pieces. With these furnishings and incredible art, the architecture needed to fade into the background.”

The renovation focused on one of the highlights of the original house, which was the sprawling view of the backyard. “I wanted to expand that element to bring light into the center of the house and reinforce that area as the heart of the home,” Benson says. The team worked around that room, adding new

**LEFT:** An Emma Childs piece hangs at the end of the hallway, with a vintage Turkish rug from Amber Interiors leading the way. A gallery wall on the right features art from various artists, including Sally King Benedict and Jean Alexander Frater. A piece by Scott Upton hangs alone on the left.

**RIGHT:** Personality abounds as soon as you enter Thomas’ home, with original walnut parquet floors in the entry paired with a vintage bench designed by Frank Lloyd Wright for Heritage. The cushion on top is covered in Rebecca Atwood fabric, and a custom rug designed by Selena Beaudry for Christopher Farr sits underfoot, signaling an art-filled home ahead. Circular art by Brenda Rehrig hangs above the bench.

**OPPOSITE:** In the dining room, Thomas wanted to preserve the geometric parquet floors original to the home. The dining table and sideboard are by British designer T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbings for Widdicomb. Vintage chairs by Marcel Breuer and Herman Miller surround the table, and art by Ben Grasso takes an unexpected place in the window. A Todd Murphy piece hangs center stage in the room while lamps by Kelly Wearstler grace the sideboard. Hanging above the table is a midcentury-style chandelier from Darnell & Company.

A blue velvet sofa with contrasting piping designed by Barrie Benson for Highland House sets a moody vibe in the family room. Chairs by vanCollier covered in Clarence House fabric sit opposite, and a blue vase by Virginia Scotchie graces the hearth. Abstract art by Kate Long Stevenson hangs above.







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—KATHARINE  
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spaces that created a better sense of connection and replacing the half-height windows with floor-to-ceiling windows in an effort to bring the outside in.

“The renovation was designed to create optimal wall space to hold art that I began collecting from art professors in college,” Thomas says. “Art has always been, for me, like a good book. It draws you in and then sinks its teeth in you. But art and architecture go hand in hand—one enhances the other and takes design to the next level.”

Much like her appreciation for an array of artists and styles, Thomas pulled her home together with the help of

different designers, each of whom brought a unique style to her interiors. Immediately following the renovation, Thomas enlisted longtime friend and designer Holly Hollingsworth Phillips of The English Room to define the new spaces and apply the art and heirloom pieces that she had collected over the years. When she began gathering artwork with Barrie Benson for her line in the Highland House showroom, Thomas asked the designer to help refine her family room. And when the time came to install an “art lounge” and update her bedroom, Charlotte Lucas picked up the baton.



“I am big on mixing styles, especially with art,” Thomas admits. “Good design comes from bringing together furniture, art, and personal items that have meaning. I have a reverence for the design and craftsmanship of everything in my home.”

Thomas credits her mother as one of her biggest influences in life. “My mom was a traveler when it wasn’t in vogue to travel,” she recalls. “My parents took us everywhere growing up. I still remember the gawking looks I got in seventh grade when I told my teachers and friends that I was spending spring break in Egypt.” She continues, saying that her mother brought her and her siblings to every museum



**LEFT:** Thomas tasked friend and designer Charlotte Lucas to transform the girls’ old playroom into a funky, moody art lounge painted in Benjamin Moore West Coast. A vintage blue sofa is paired with vintage lemon-yellow chairs. An abstract sculpture by Conny Goelz Schmitt sits just under the sconce, while art by Selena Beaudry hangs above the sofa. A Mick Jagger piece by Charlie Hanavich adds a cool vibe, and coffee tables from Schoolhouse maintain the vintage feel.

**RIGHT:** Soaring windows and a gallery wall of art by artists Rana Rochat and Helen Robinson, among others, make breakfast time interesting and relaxing at once. The tulip table and chairs were designed by Finnish architect Eero Saarinen and purchased from Design Within Reach. A Jonathan Adler chandelier hangs above. Barstools designed by Harry Bertioia, also purchased from Design Within Reach, add a pop of chartreuse to the room.



**BELOW:** A bed and bench from Room & Board anchor the owner's suite. The subtle feminine wallpaper by Aux Abris features birds in flight around the room. Portraits of her children, painted by Sarah Helsler, offer a sentimental touch, and pink vintage bedside tables inherited from Thomas' great aunt are from American of Martinsville. The bedspread was custom-made by Charlotte Lucas Interiors.

**OPPOSITE:** In the owner's suite, designer Charlotte Lucas created a sophisticated sitting area with soft seating by Charles Stewart Company. A rose gold cocktail table by Kate Modern was purchased from Chairish, and a tall floor lamp by Ralph Lauren Home stands in the corner. A piece by Sarah Helsler hangs over the love seat.



she could find, large and small. “She always brought back items from her travels and put them in our home. She had amazing taste, and a home should tell a story of your life. That is the lesson I learned from my mother.”

Having lived in her home for well over a decade, Thomas says her life can be seen in the layers that have formed over time through acquiring art, books, found objects, rugs, and plants. “All the personal items have meaning, from my grandfather’s antique paperweights to the olive shells and sand dollars collected over family trips to the coast and displayed in treasured silver bowls. My friend and business

partner and I even collect the catalogs from every museum or gallery we visit.”

Every piece of art that Thomas has brought home marks a certain time in her life and tells a specific story, so asking her to name a favorite, she says, is akin to asking her to choose a favorite child. But she can define the room she gravitates to the most. “The living room is the center of our home and the first thing you see when you come in; it’s full of beloved furniture passed down to me from my grandparents and designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1955. Sitting in this room brings back memories, and I can feel the love of my family, past and present.” ♦