

Charlotte

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Once an unused pass-through space, Robusto designed a living room that encourages relaxation and entertaining. A channeled upholstered sofa by Four Hands and a chandelier by Arteriors produce a rustic yet elegant look.



MAKEOVER MAGIC

DESIGNER KERRI ROBUSTO TURNS
A DATED HOME INTO A STUNNING
SANCTUARY AND ENTERTAINING
HUB FOR ONE WEDDINGTON COUPLE.

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Formerly a small dining area, the breakfast room now features a much larger dining table to accommodate larger groups of people. The table and leather chairs are by Four Hands, while the host chairs are by Gabby Home. The artwork is by Artists Guild of America. **OPPOSITE:** Not wanting the home to be completely devoid of color, Robusto incorporated a handful of neutral colors onto the walls in this basement home office while the furnishings remained neutral and textured. The chairs, ottoman, and leather rug are by Four Hands. The pillows are by Surya.



WHEN KERRI ROBUSTO'S FRIEND REACHED OUT TO her in the middle of 2020, all she wanted was to find a new dining room table. "I had looked all over for a table and could not find it, or, if I did, it wouldn't be available for ten to twelve months," says the friend. "I've known Kerri for twenty-five years, so I knew I could reach out to her for help." Robusto, a designer, did, in fact, help her friend find the table she wanted, and she got it within weeks of her request.

But as the friend's mini-makeover of her Weddington home progressed, she continued calling on Robusto for help. "Until one

day I just said, 'OK, wait, what are we going for here? What look are we trying to create,'" says the designer. "So we sat down and honed in on what she wanted to achieve." And with that, that one farmhouse table snowballed into a whole-home renovation and interior makeover.

Built in 2003 by her clients, the custom home was stunning for its time. It had an elegant French-country aesthetic with an earth-tone color palette, natural stone details, smaller, more intimate entertaining spaces, dark wood finishes, hardwood floors (that had yellowed over time), and faux painting nearly everywhere you





turned. But by 2020, the homeowners, who are empty nesters, had been bitten by the design bug and wanted to update the home and transform it into a space with a seamless, open floor plan with modern finishes and an updated color palette. “There was a lot of beige and lots of very heavy custom plaid and taffeta window treatments that were very nice, but they were just so heavy and dark,” Robusto says. “Plus, they entertain a lot, and those smaller, more intimate rooms were not conducive to the type of entertaining they do today. So we had to open and brighten things up.”

Robusto removed interior walls to reconfigure the main living area’s floor plan so that it was more open and seamless from room to room. The formal dining room was transformed into a larger family room ideal for entertaining several guests. Robusto removed a wall to open up the kitchen. Stacked stone details on columns and walls throughout the main living area and basement were stripped and wrapped in wood with a lighter, modern stain. Robusto didn’t stop there: she replaced the ornate iron scroll stair railings with a more modern option, and she swapped the kitchen counters and backsplash with a more contemporary palette. “To say it was a complete renovation top to bottom is an understatement,” Robusto laughs.

The interior design was truly spurred by Robusto’s client, who was willing to be more daring in some of her design choices. “She would find things and send me pictures, so I knew where her taste was going,” the designer explains. “We worked well together. I designed a plan for the dining room, for example, and showed her this fun, funky, over-the-top wallpaper that she’d either love or hate. And she loved it. So I was like, ‘OK, this is the vibe we’re going to go with.’ She’s bold and daring. But we definitely went more subtle in the main areas of the house with the family room and living room.” White-oak paneling instantly brightened the living room, while the kitchen

LEFT: This cut-through to the kitchen serves as a gathering area for guests and opens up the once closed-off kitchen. The leather barstools complement the white-oak paneling by Regina Andrew. The pendants are by Robert Abbey.

RIGHT: Robusto removed all the interior stacked stonework, which was wrapped around the columns in the main living area and the basement. She then installed white-oak paneling to provide interest and instantly brighten the spaces. The white leathered marble waterfall detail from the kitchen counter imparts an additional feature.

OPPOSITE: The formerly dark and dated kitchen was updated with a coat of paint on the cabinets, while the granite counters were replaced with white leathered marble. The metal hood was removed, and a wood hood with gold strapping was added to modernize the space.

The dining room's design was inspired by the daring metallic wallpaper by Osborne & Little. For additional interest, Robusto included a pair of chandeliers by Arteriors, which feature five layers of white-washed wooden sticks on curved iron arms.



cabinets repainted in a soft neutral cream paired with leathered marble counters made the main living areas lighter and more welcoming. “We wanted to lighten up the whole house and give it a much more casual yet pulled-together feel. We went with a very neutral palette with an Old Hollywood meets boho-chic style.” Faux painting was covered with textured grasscloths, and a dramatic, dark crocodile wallcovering in the sitting room, previously a home office, resulted in a sleek, contemporary aesthetic.

Robusto replaced nearly all of her client’s existing furniture with updated, modern pieces such as chairs swathed in Mongolian fur in the basement living room and contemporary lighting, which functions almost like art in each space. Robusto balanced those more modern pieces with timeless textures and lines in functional but stylish sectionals and entertaining pieces that will transition with her clients through the years. “My client does stay on trend, so she’s aware of what a more modern look is and knew that’s what she



TOP: The basement living room was formerly dark and uninviting. Robusto covered the walls in the basement with a textured ombre grasscloth by Thibaut, which instantly brightened the space. The blush leather chairs by Regina Andrew are cozy enough for relaxing conversation. The floor tile is from Floor & Decor.



BOTTOM: The area underneath the basement stairs was formerly an outdated dark-wood bar with mustard-yellow faux painting. Robusto transformed the space into a seating area and reading nook using the same custom wallpaper found in the nearby powder room.

Robusto transformed the basement sitting room into a cozy gathering space by adding a sectional by Alder & Tweed. The adjacent leather chair is by Four Hands, and the cocktail table is by Uttermost.



wanted—she just hadn’t incorporated any items yet, and that dining table really got the ball rolling,” Robusto says.

Once Robusto got started, no room was left untouched, including the entire basement. With faux painting and murals, dark wood finishes, and a mustard-yellow color palette, the space felt even darker and more dated than the upstairs. The designer transformed the basement into a brighter, more inviting space where her clients could entertain. “The basement didn’t feel like a space you wanted to host guests,” Robusto says. She wrapped the entire downstairs in an ombre Thibaut wallcovering, which gives

the basement an airy, welcoming feeling that encourages relaxing and gathering.

For the homeowner, the year-long project was a tremendous success, though she never imagined she would renovate her whole home when she first reached out to Robusto. “This house is the longest I have ever lived anywhere,” she says. “So while we thought we might want to sell this and downsize before we began this renovation and makeover process with Kerri, now it’s this spectacular home. We want to reap the benefits of the amazing work Kerri did.” ♦

Robusto transformed the rarely used home office into a sitting area for entertaining. To create a moody, dramatic aesthetic, she wrapped the walls in a black crocodile wallcovering by Graham & Brown.

