

Triangle

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HOME

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A scullery is always an interesting addition, according to McKay, and she enjoyed designing this one with open shelves that provide plenty of opportunity for styling. Shail Construction installed cabinets by Cabico, and the tile is from Traditions in Tile and Stone. **OPPOSITE:** Carrara marble floating shelves couple with a marble backsplash to create a stunning, sophisticated kitchen detail.



FOREVER



HOME

DESIGNER LAUREN MCKAY JOINS HER CLIENT'S NEW CUSTOM HOME PROJECT TO BRING IT FROM A CONCEPT TO THE TANGIBLE.

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INTERIOR DESIGNER

Lauren McKay was comfortable with the Russo family's style—not only had she helped them furnish their previous home, but over the past nine years she also designed Justin Russo's dental office. When they asked McKay to design their new custom home, she was eager to help and confident they could nail the project perfectly.

"I worked with Justin and Lesley on their previous home while I was a designer at Design Lines," recalls McKay. "Justin is such a hard worker and as he was working to grow his dental business, I could tell that home wouldn't be their forever home, but they wanted to make it nice while they gathered ideas for the home they ultimately wanted to build someday."

The Russos had friends who lived in the Bella Vista neighborhood in north Raleigh, and they loved the oversized lots and open spaces the area afforded, along with the proximity to town and the ease of access to the airport. They partnered with Shail Construction to build their custom home, architected by Tony Frazier, and asked McKay to help them design it from the ground up.

"When it came time to choose an interior designer for our new home build, Lauren was the natural choice," says Lesley Russo. "We were very happy



Because the Russos spend so much time in the kitchen, it had to be a well-functioning, beautiful hub. Carrara marble countertops complement the butcher-block island and all-white cabinetry, all set beneath a coffered ceiling made of natural wood completed by Shail Construction.





ABOVE: The jewel box of a powder room features Romo wallpaper and a custom vanity by Old Biscayne Designs, designed by McKay. The sconces are by Visual Comfort. A mirror by Bungalow 5 keeps things interesting.

RIGHT: In the pool house bathroom, McKay chose an apropos wallcovering with a mermaid pattern by Hygge & West in cool blues, and paired it with crisp black marble and white tile from Traditions in Tile and Stone.



with the design selection and process of our previous home and my husband's dental office. Lauren has a great ability to listen to our ideas and overall vision and bring it to life while also infusing her own creative ideas, style, and design expertise."

From the outset, McKay knew the Russos were looking at inspiration from homes in Utah that featured grand facades and unique, interesting details. They had also recently returned from a memorable family trip to Paris, and the time-tested architectural details and grand structures were things they wanted to bring into their own custom home. "Funny enough, I had just been to Paris the year before them, as well," says McKay, "and no wall in that city is untouched—details are everything, and seeing a historical place like that really does influence what you want to see in your own home. It makes you want to use every surface to express your style, and that's what I tried to bring into the Russos' new custom home."

With that in mind, McKay's design featured plenty of white space, lighter wood tones, and mostly neutral hues. "Compared to their last home, this home is more classic," says McKay. "Still, there are some bold spaces; they aren't afraid of color. In fact, the dining room features a deep teal mural wallpaper by Schumacher that inspired the space."

In the living room, French-inspired details like white walls, wall paneling, tall windows, ornate knobs on the built-ins, and art by Natural Curiosities above the baby grand piano make the room feel elegant yet casual. A custom sectional sofa by Hallman Furniture anchors the room, and two Hickory Chair swivels offer extra seating.







Mural wallpaper panels by Schumacher drove the design in the dining room, pulling in deep blues amidst an otherwise neutral home palette. The wine niche features a Romo wood veneer chevron wallpaper. The dining table has a Bradley base with a custom gray Ceasarstone quartz top fabricated by ROCKin'teriors.





ABOVE: In the grand owner's suite, grasscloth wallpaper by Wallquest softens the space while a custom marble fireplace, fabricated by Ivy Lane, takes center stage. McKay provided the custom canopy bed with a tufted headboard, and reeded bedside tables add a Parisian touch. A brass chandelier from Visual Comfort hangs above.

LEFT: Marble adorns the Russos' bathroom, with a basketweave tile pattern on the floor that was custom cut on-site, all from Traditions in Tile and Stone. A gold-leaf étagère from Worlds Away holds necessities and niceties while custom white cabinetry keeps the space feeling clean and bright.

"Both my husband and I knew we wanted something timeless and traditional, and we took to Pinterest and the internet to help us find inspiration," says Russo. "Lauren helped us pore through our growing inspiration boards and was able to pinpoint the look we were going for; I think she once described our vision as classic French chateau-inspired with lots of European influence. Spot-on."

The kitchen was a central part of the project, and McKay worked hard to make it functional and beautiful, incorporating many of the Parisian influences the design plan called for, such as natural materials, caning on the chairs, and bistro pendant lights. "The scullery was particularly fun and different

to work on," recalls the designer. "The contained nature kept the design interesting, and the open shelves offered great opportunities for styling. We also made a portion of the cabinetry look like a China cabinet and lined the inside of the cabinet with Gracie wallpaper for a wow factor."

"We have three kids, and we spend so much time in the open spaces in our home. They function perfectly for us," says Russo. "We have a laundry room that doubles as a homework room right off the kitchen, designed intentionally to be there so that the kids would have their own space that was close to where we spend the most time. Our kitchen leads right into the open living room, where the kids are often



ABOVE: The butler's pantry provided another opportunity for color, with cabinets painted in Cabico's Blue Fir, ordered through Shail Construction. A gold chandelier from Visual Comfort creates high contrast interest, and tiles from Traditions in Tile complement the bold tones. Classic brass hardware with custom monograms, purchased from Byrd Decorative Hardware, add a personal touch on the center doors.

RIGHT: "My favorite part of the home is perhaps the foyer," describes McKay. "When you walk in, it's just so stunning. The details are unexpected, from the tile pattern to the shaped pickets on the stairs to the runner, which has a sheen to it, to the millwork on the walls." An entry table from Hickory Chair welcomes guests. An acrylic and brass chandelier from Visual Comfort hangs overhead.



playing, watching TV, practicing their piano, or just hanging out. The kitchen also looks out to the pool, where we now spend a lot of time. So the kitchen is the most important room in our home, designed to connect us to all the spaces we spend the most time as a family."

With marble, organic woods, and white permeating their idea boards, McKay got the message loud and clear and draped most of the surfaces in these materials. She also incorporated a French blue color, which also kept popping up in their favorite designs. The dining room called for wallpaper, and when they were looking through options, McKay and Russo kept coming back to the bold Schumacher mural, and they knew it was the one. "Even with the deep blues, it felt like it still related to the other spaces while having its own personality," says McKay.

Ultimately, McKay created a home for the Russos that speaks to what they've worked so hard to create: a custom family home that ties in everything that's most dear to them. "So many hours went into fleshing out our vision, and many more went into designing it, so when we began to see the house finally taking shape, it was pretty surreal to see it all come to life," recalls Russo. "Even now, living here the past five months since moving in, my husband and I still find it pretty exciting to enjoy this house on a daily basis." ♦

A Hickory White breakfast table centers the breakfast room, and floor-to-ceiling draperies flank windows that overlook the pool. A Julie Neill for Visual Comfort chandelier hangs overhead.

