



White paint on the ceiling, walls, and floor provide a bright backdrop for the dining room's striking china cabinet and green wicker chairs.



Gilded frames, fixtures, and trim provide continuity throughout the home.

A HOME OF THEIR OWN

Written by Jessen O'Brien / Photography by Alise O'Brien

Often, couples fall in love with an older home despite the work it needs. But for Amy Studebaker and her husband, Nick Milonas, the fact that their 1950s Southern Colonial required a complete demolition of the interior was what made it so perfect.

"I wanted a blank canvas to work with," says Studebaker. "One of the first things I loved about our home was that it needed a gut renovation."

Gut renovations are Studebaker's speciality. As the owner and principal designer of Amy Studebaker Design, she's been helping families from New York to California create their dream homes for more than a decade using her signature blend of new and classic décor. This time, however, her own family was the client. A fix-upper meant they had the opportunity to design a home whose every inch was just right for them.

"We wanted a place that we could put our stamp on -- a space that felt like it belonged to us and functioned well for our family," says Studebaker. While there were some aspects of the home they loved just as they were -- such as the gracious second level foyer, which charmed Studebaker right from the start -- others would require considerable construction before they could move in. So they got to work right away, updating the kitchen and most of the bathrooms; reconfiguring the lower level and much of the main floor; installing new flooring; and completely redesigning the front facade.

"Both Nick and I had strong feelings of what we wanted and didn't want," says Studebaker. As a result, "over the course of the construction process, our vision stayed on course." In particular, Studebaker had a vision of what the exterior should look like even before the couple purchased the home. "The curb appeal had to be just right: a balcony with a beautiful, southern design along with large columns."

White brick was non-negotiable. Studebaker paired it with black details for a clean yet traditional look. But first impressions can be deceiving; step inside, and the classic monochrome disappears in favor of a color palette that feels as if it were pulled from a spring day, with plenty of sky blues, fresh greens, and little splashes of coral. Painted wood floors -- white throughout much of the home, with blue-and-white stenciling in the first-floor foyer -- bounce the light, bringing an extra brightness to the space.

"Keeping to a particular color scheme and making one color the primary color in each space helps make a home feel cohesive," says Studebaker. For example, the living room is mostly made up of soft blues, with a few touches of green -- the inverse of the neighboring dining room. Here, green paint gives the inside of an antique china cabinet a modern twist. Floral drapes and green wicker chairs decked with green and coral pillows add to the room's garden feel.

The blue-and-white kitchen combines traditional touches with clean, modern lines.



The counter and pail connect the original home, on the left, with the previous addition on the right.



A bright blue vanity and tub trim create a modern and fun feel, despite powder room.



This spacious dining room foyer is one of the reasons Southwell is full for the home.

Botanical prints and a garden stool bring the colors used throughout the home into the master bath.



A cozy corner in the master bedroom.

The dining room flows directly into a sophisticated blue-and-white kitchen -- bringing the color scheme full circle. Studebaker chose to forgo upper cabinets, instead making the most of a generous island and lower cabinets, both painted a muted light blue. This decision established an open feel to the room that's enhanced by the minimalist white marble backsplash, which cascades down to the countertops. An oil still life with an antique frame is perched atop the backsplash's ledge, where it can easily be admired from wicker Serena & Lily barstools. Blue tile Roman window shades and brass hardware complete the look. Around the corner, the first-floor powder room provides a playful take on this blue-and-white palette with a bold printed wallpaper and cheery, bright blue mirror and vanity.

Everywhere you turn, you'll find antiques juxtaposed with new pieces, from the artwork to the furniture. "I love mixing old and new, and when you create this mix throughout a home, it brings each of your spaces together," says Studebaker. Take the living room, where a blue velvet sofa by Hickory Chair and white linen Lee Industries' club chairs hug a lacquered coffee table custom-made by Goebel Furniture. While Studebaker "adores[s] every single piece of furniture in my home," in the corner lies one of her favorites: an Italian commode from the early 1800s. "The craftsmanship is absolutely stunning," she says.

This approach of pairing high and low as well old and new is the same one Studebaker uses when working for clients. "The only difference is that I finally get to live in a home that I created," says Studebaker. Her process always begins by "designing for

function, then adding beautiful details." The next stage is picking out furniture and décor, keeping to only the items you love and "absolutely can't live without."

Upstairs, the blues and greens continue. Painted white walls, floor, and ceiling create a bright and airy backdrop for green and blue fabrics in the master bedroom, including a blue rug, whose pattern mirrors the stencil work in the first floor hallway; green cushions; and floral curtains. The connecting master bathroom is a showstopper, with white marble tile laid in a herringbone pattern and blue botanical prints surrounding the luxurious freestanding tub. But the real star is the double vanity, a custom piece rendered in white marble with antique brass fixtures and piping. Above it hang two Regency-style mirrors flanked with sconces.

Down the hall, the dressing room is utterly feminine, thanks to its floral wallpaper and coral curtains. A crystal chandelier and gilded chair provide a bit of sparkle, while a faded pink-and-green rug and comfortable sofa with green velvet trim help the room strike just the right balance of cozy and glam.

Because of the extent of the renovation, Studebaker touched almost every room before her family moved in. As a result, it can be hard to choose a favorite. "I truly enjoy each space and how they have all come together," says Studebaker. "Everything was designed specifically for us and how we live. When I look back at the process of selecting and designing our home, I remember how excited I was to be able to create a home for my family that was just for us." **17**