

# New Chapter, Old House



AFTER YEARS OF DOWNTOWN LOFT LIVING, ATLANTA COUPLE (AND CREATIVE POWERHOUSE) LAURA AND MCLEAN JENKINS PUT DOWN ROOTS IN HISTORIC GRANT PARK. SLOWLY BUT SURELY, IT'S BECOME DISTINCTLY THEIR OWN.

INTERIOR DESIGN BY LAURA JENKINS • STYLING BY BLAKE WEEKS  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF HERR • PORTRAIT BY BERI IRVING  
ARCHITECT: MCLEAN JENKINS • CONTRACTOR: TILLMAN RESIDENTIAL



# “Unlike even most old

neighborhoods in Atlanta, Grant Park stood out for its architectural succinctness—Victorian after Victorian around the tree-lined park, with their front porches, tall windows and sturdy clapboards,” says interior designer Laura Jenkins. “Many needed quite a bit of work and love, and this one was no exception.”

For starters, when Laura and her husband McLean first entered the home, they found every room painted in a different lurid pastel. And their assessment went downhill from there. “We had the distinct impression that a misstep could send you tumbling through the sagging floorboards in several spots,” Laura says. Beyond its flaws, however, she saw a checklist of classic bones under a neglected veneer: a capacious central hallway, large rooms, high ceilings, and a house with an intact layout that still felt old in the best way.

They did a few necessary repairs prior to moving in with Louis, their standard poodle. Two years in, their son Archer arrived. Four years in, and a serious renovation was underway. “Our goal with the renovation was to create a final result that felt period appropriate, current for today, yet had a feeling of timelessness,” she tells us. “More than anything else it had to have presence enough to serve as a backdrop to our collection of art and furniture. In the process we preserved so much of what the house offered naturally: large rooms feeding into a great hall, quite imperfect but lustrous heart pine floors, wavy-glassed windows, picture molding there for the taking to create a gallery effect with our art, and original hardware even with its chips and cracks. For that was the point—breathing life back into the house without stripping it of its essential timeworn spirit.”

Laura describes her work as forward-thinking. “I studied history as well as interior design, so I love to bring in classic details paired with a modern twist to create unique spaces and homes,” she says. “I really feel a spirit in old buildings and old things. I always consider who has been there before and who will be there next. As a standard practice in my work, I try hard to look to historical precedent as inspiration rather than look to what is happening now.”

McLean is a skilled architect and has been at McAlpine House for the last 15 years. While Laura’s design practice is fully capable of construction documents, the couple is passionate about their individual work and let the other one take charge in their own jurisdictions: He oversees space planning and detailing; she handles the materiality of rooms. “McLean is opinionated, but he is also very trusting of my taste, and I of his,” Laura says. “He is an architect, and I am an interior designer—and, while those two terms might have a lot of crossovers, they also are indicative of our strengths. This house was a true collaboration and something we enjoyed doing together...a lot.”

## NOW AND THEN

“We want this room to look as if it could have been designed many years ago but also completely of the moment,” Laura says of her kitchen. The materials will patina and acquire a “perfectly imperfect” look that comes only with time and wear. A petite custom banquette (opening page) was designed by the couple and built by Holland MacRae.

It’s joined by McLean’s original watercolors, a vintage French table, the Zig Zag chair, the Stokke highchair (originally designed in the ‘70s), and a reproduction Le Corbusier light fixture. “That in a nutshell, shows how I like to design,” she says.





**COLOR EVOLUTION**

Though they painted the interior white when they first moved in, it was just to act as a blank canvas that would play with the light until the right color palette came to Laura. "My mother had recently given me a terra-cotta bowl that had been a wedding present to her and my father. When I put that bowl in the room, I knew it was the perfect color for the walls," she says. The powerful art is by James Way.

**A BOUTIQUE APPROACH**

The designer focuses on residential design now, but her 17-year background in the industry began in commercial spaces. "I still do an occasional restaurant," she says, referencing her current work on the popular Holeman & Finch Public House. "But I have found my passion in residential interiors. I love helping my clients realize their vision for their homes and I have found a new creative freedom that commercial interiors often don't allow for. You can design to a higher quality and create something with more permanence. I love teaching my clients about design history and helping them build their own collections of furniture, objects, and art."





**MAKE YOUR MARK**

In the guest bathroom, the couple's creativity is on display. "We needed a room where we could write and draw things that inspire us, so a small bathroom seemed to be a perfect place to do that," she shares. "We updated the lighting in the room, added our touches with our various collections and then started to draw. It has evolved as our family has grown and we encourage guests and our son to add their mark to the wall."



**BEAUTY REST**

In the primary suite, Laura aimed to create a peaceful retreat. "We started with our artwork which has grey and pink undertones," she says, "and I also knew that I wanted the Stark leopard rug. I love fashion, and leopard print is a perfect fashion-forward neutral. Mix in some of my favorite pieces, the Togo sofa, the quirky cocktail table, and some of our favorite works of art, et voila, we created the perfect primary suite."