



Gavin Duke reinvented the landscaping that gave "Boxwood" its name. OPPOSITE: Louis XVI chairs. Custom dining table. Hurricane, John Rosselli. Lamp, Robert Altman. African bowl, Karl Kemp and Assoc. Limestone and wood floor by Gil Schafer and David Netto.



# TEAM OF RIVALS

The Architect, the Decorator and the battle for the soul of a beautiful historic house in Nashville.

INTERIOR DESIGN BY DAVID NETTO RENOVATION ARCHITECTURE BY GIL SCHAFER  
 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE BY PAGE DUKE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS  
 PHOTOGRAPHY BY MAX KIM-BEE  
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OPPOSITE, FAR LEFT: In entry, Louis XVI chairs. Tablecloth in Claremont felt; trim, Brunschwig & Fils. Custom console and mirror. Lamp, Robert Altman. Art, Jean-Michel Basquiat. LEFT: Wallpaper, Lee Jofa; trim, Samuel & Sons. Swedish desk, Eileen Lane Antiques, as vanity. Mirror, John Rosselli. THIS PAGE: Antiquetable, Christopher Hodson. Chairs, John Rosselli, in Edelman Leather. Sideboard, Godson & Coles. Mirror, Alan Moss. Basket, Aero. Lamp, Carole Gratale. Chandelier, Robert Kime. Wallpaper, de Gournay.

THE GOOD NEWS WAS, WE KNEW WHAT TO EXPECT FROM ONE ANOTHER. ARCHITECT GIL SCHAFER AND I HAD BEEN FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES FOR A LONG TIME, AND HE WAS AWARE OF WHAT I CALL MY "IRREVERENT" APPROACH TO INTERIOR DECORATION.

But neither of us had expected to undertake together such a comprehensive renovation as that of "Boxwood," one of the most prominent houses in the Belle Meade neighborhood of Nashville—let alone a project that at one point unnervingly left this house without floors or a roof and that ultimately took more than three years.

The original architect of Boxwood in 1914 was the great American classicist Charles Platt. If Platt had been cryogenically frozen and transported to our time, he would probably wake up and find himself to be Gil Schafer. There might have been no better choice of architect than Gil, whose specialty is American classicism. Boxwood was not his first project in the South. But after the house's many years of genteel alterations, additions and the occasional interior caprice, this property could have been the one that needed him most.

What Boxwood required architecturally was a coherent master plan to bring it back to life. And what the family who was to live in it required was decoration that

went in the opposite direction and felt young enough that you could be sure J.P. Morgan had not just died in there. This made for some head-butting and lively discussion between Gil and myself from time to time. Fortunately, I had my assistant, Joanna Heimbold, there to referee.

The Architect: "I've loved Platt's work since I was in college, for two reasons: his sensitive consideration of landscape as it relates to architecture, and the elegance of his moldings and details. This house presented challenges because of its innate dignity and the need to have it end up being 'young.' One way we infused the latter feeling is by opening up the flow. There are almost no hallways on the ground floor. Having views from room to room—so you wouldn't get marooned at one end or the other of this long house—was very important to me. David's willingness to think outside the box sometimes ran counter to my classical rigor, but that tension made the collaboration a lot more fun."

The Decorator: Boxwood is the sort of house you can't





ABOVE: Leather chair, from Rud Rasmussen, and dining chairs, all by Hans Wegner. Dining table, Antiquario. Coffee table, Ralph Lauren Home. Wingchair, Waldo's Designs, in Osborne & Little fabric. Mirror, John Stefanidis. Mantel, Chesney's. Travers fabric by Joanna Heimbold and David Netto for curtains. Ceiling fixture, Charles Edwards. Rug, Beauvais.

BELOW AND OPPOSITE: Custom sofa in Hinson & Co. fabric. Coffee table, wood lamps and chandelier, all John Rosselli. Glass screens, John Boone. Pair of custom chairs in Bennison fabric. Curtains in Travers fabric. Gothic chair, Westenholz Antiques. Rope chair, Soane. Mantel, Jamb. Mirror, Ross Hamilton. Stool, Aero. Rug, Beauvais.





PRECEDING PAGES: Walls in Osborne & Little fabric. Lantern, Vaughan. THIS PAGE: Walls and custom bed in Les Indiennes cotton. Canopy interior in Pierre Frey silk. Linens, Dea. Bench, Lee Calicchio. Custom dresser, Table lamps, Christopher Spitzmiller. Wall lamp, Besselink & Jones. Painting, Kate Shepherd. OPPOSITE: Vanity and sink, Urban Archaeology. Tile, Waterworks. Custom mirror. All light fixtures, Jean Karajian Collection.



be intimidated by, or you know what you'll end up with—a country club. Beautiful but all grown up, which is just how these people didn't want to feel in it. They have tumbling children, they love to go skiing, they fly their own airplanes. I especially like the late Chicago architect David Adler's work because he showed you can mix the most correct classicism with anything—modernism, Navajo rugs, wicker—if you have a sure hand. My favorite room at Boxwood might be the entrance hall, because it looks so correct at first. Then you notice the bold scale of the stone floor—which Gil and I predictably had an O.K. Corral moment over—and the Basquiat, and you realize there's some rock 'n' roll in here, it's not a high mass, and we're going to have a good time.

Boxwood today is a great example of things nobody does anymore: We didn't demolish the house, which would have been easier. We restored it. We didn't double the size of the footprint. We respected it. Gil's architecture looks for all the world like it was always there, and the decoration is of a completely different viewpoint. He brought the discipline to this picnic, and I brought the colors and fantasy. You do need both. □