



all settled in

A Philadelphia interior designer creates a home for Texas transplants in Villanova. *By Tara Behan*

The initial project request started small. Homeowner Sharon Shaver wanted help with details like choosing carpet and paint colors for the upstairs of a Villanova house her family had just purchased. A new job for Shaver's husband, Charlie, had them uprooting from Texas to the Main Line.

An online search led to Philadelphia-based designer Michele Plachter. "I hit the jackpot when I found Michele," says Shaver, who was intrigued by Plachter's commitment to doing the unexpected. The two women clicked, and Plachter has since worked on almost every room in the over-9,800-square-foot home.

Sweet suite

A bedroom suite for the Shavers' tween daughter took precedence throughout the project. Since she had to endure a long-distance move, the couple wanted their daughter to have a special place to enjoy with friends.

"We didn't want the rooms to be too girly, so we designed it so that in three to five years, with just repainting, it would have a different feel, without having to change everything," says Plachter.

In the bedroom, choices were refined, with sky-blue paint, crisp white linens accented with a custom coral velvet, a nail-

head-trim headboard, and a mirrored vanity with matching bench. Plachter added Jim Thompson butterfly wallpaper on the ceiling of the walkway between the bedroom and the sitting area.

The custom sectional, with seat cushions in varying patterns, is the ideal size for lounging kids. Plachter chose a durable indoor-outdoor fabric to alleviate any concerns about spills. A hanging rattan chair provides additional seating. The ottoman, covered in a Brentano fabric with a hot-pink bubble-gum hue, is a linen-rayon blend coated with polyurethane so it can be wiped clean. *continued on page 35*

resources **interior design:** Michele Plachter Design, 709 Walnut St., No. 2F, Philadelphia, (215) 518-9912, www.micheleplachter.com. **woodworkers:** Adam and Nicole Karr, Springhouse Shop and Studio, 396 Municipal Road, Benton, (570) 606-8737, www.springhousewoodshop.com.

ANDREA CIPRIANI MECCHI



DARK AND HANDSOME: (Clockwise from opposite page) Black makes the living room "pop." Dining room accents display the same sensibility. A tweener bedroom is created to look fantastic, handle abuse and age well. In the kitchen, a wall of glass-fronted built-in cabinetry was transformed from traditional cherrywood to a high-gloss black, with green lacquer inside.



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“One of my mantras is you don’t have to sacrifice style and functionality and wait until your children get older. If anything, it gets worse as they get older,” says Plachter. “The reality is, you can have a beautiful space—you just need to be working with someone who is conscious of the materials they’re using.”

The room’s main highlight is a custom built-in designed to house a 90-gallon fish tank, with open shelves on either side to display books and tchotchkes.

Just add black

Once the tween suite was complete, Plachter was tapped to update the look of the first-floor living areas.

“My goal is to bring more of a fresh, youthful energy to these suburban homes,” says Plachter. “I always say it’s like a little heartbeat of the city that’s followed me out here. I think it’s easy to get wrapped up into what everyone else is doing in the neighborhood, but I like to think outside the box. Let’s do something that has a little bit of wow. If you’re buying these beautiful homes, let’s make it special.”

The Shavers were game for making the most of the opportunity to start over with bolder design choices in their new home, and Plachter has proven that impactful makeovers can occur without having to do construction. It was as simple as adding black paint.

“The use of black accents really sets off and pulls together a lot of the spaces,” says Plachter. “It works really well.”

In the dining room, the molding and the coffered ceiling were painted a semi-gloss black to make both elements pop. In the kitchen, a wall of built-in cabinetry with glass-front doors went from traditional cherry to a high-gloss black with green lacquer inside.

“It’s a big commitment for clients to paint built-ins, but I knew this would pay off,” says Plachter.

At first, Shaver wasn’t sure. “I took the longest to decide on painting the built-in,” she says. “Then I took a leap of faith and said, ‘Do it.’ Now, it’s one of my favorite things in the house. I’m so glad we did it.”

Outside the powder room in a small pass-through space that many might have overlooked, Plachter didn’t miss the opportunity to make an impact. The drama of all-black walls and molding are softened with white accent pieces, including

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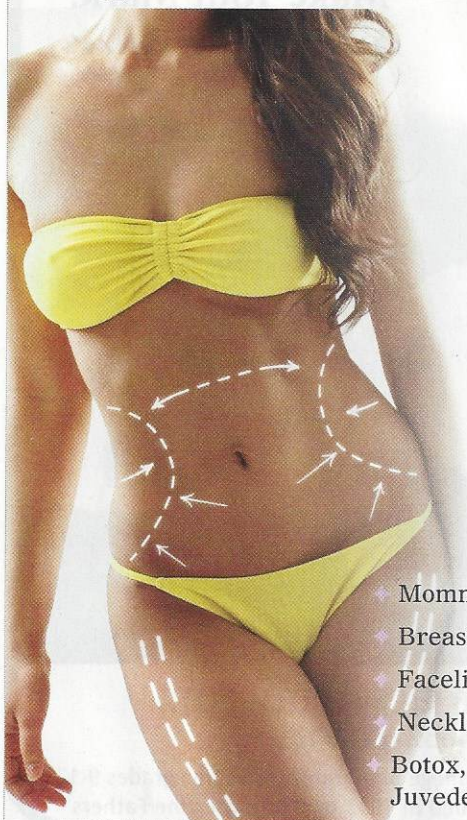
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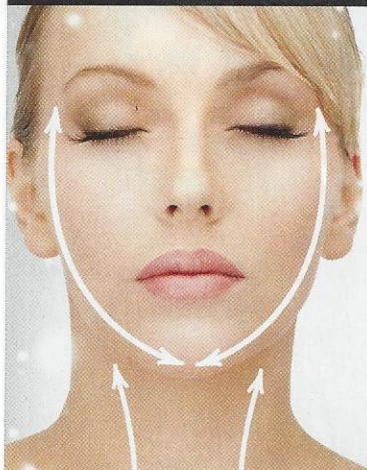
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a Stray Dog Designs papier-mâché deer head with flowers sitting on the tips of its antlers, and a marble Global Views grid-block console table.

Well lit

It's not often that you see a light fixture with cast-resin bubbles grouped like a bunch of grapes hanging from an antique silver chain, in a formal living room. And that's exactly what Plachter's motive was when she selected the Muriel sconce from OLY Studio.

"It's the perfect example of having an unexpected element in a room," she says. "It's so beautiful and unique—you're not going to see that everywhere. It definitely makes the room."

Above the table in the dining room, the Nessa chandelier from Arteriors is the glam focal point that the space needed to elevate it to formal status. The oval-shaped, three-tier chandelier has eight lights, surrounded by 128 fluted glass rods. "We wanted sparkle in that space, and this chandelier brought it," Plachter says.

Also from Arteriors, a whimsical chandelier with 18 mouth-blown glass doves perched around the center lights is set above the round dining table in the kitchen eating area. "I love all the lighting," says Shaver. "In every room, there's something special to look at."

Lone Star touches

Plachter filled the family room with reminders of the Shavers' former home. She created an accent wall with a custom rustic-oak installation, arranged horizontally from floor to ceiling, with storage space underneath. A TV is incorporated into the piece, with a pair of antique brass sconces on either side. A Kyle Bunting cowhide rug can be found under a wood table with Lucite legs.

"I used a lot of different textures to give this room a modern farmhouse feel," says Plachter.

A light-gray leather couch is the perfect shade for the neutral tones in the room. Special touches include side tables with hand-blown glass tops by nationally acclaimed artisan John Pomp.

"We wanted this house to feel more modern, but not too contemporary," says Shaver. "It has the transitional look that we envisioned. Every time I walk into the house, I love every room. I truly feel like I'm home." **MLT**