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IN HER ATLANTA HOME, DESIGNER BETTY BURGESS USES
ART AND TEXTURE TO BRING A NEUTRAL CANVAS TO LIFE

BY DANNY C. FLANDERS PHOTOGRAPHED BY WILLIAM WALDRON PRODUCED BY MOLLY PASTOR





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ake no mistake: Betty Burgess loves color and knows how to use it. But when the Atlanta designer goes home at the end of the day, the last things she wants to think about are a zillion hues, paint chips, fabrics, and trims. At home, she's all about neutrals and black and white.

That restful palette makes her Buckhead home sparkle with elegance yet entices her to prop up her feet. "I work with color so much that I need something to calm me down and give my brain a break," she says.

Yet that "something" also has to hold a few surprises to keep her stimulated—anything from an 18th-century sideboard converted from an old brasserie beer cooler to a papier-mâché bust snatched up at the local flea market. "As far as I'm concerned, you can have a \$20,000 chest and put a \$2 trinket on it," Burgess says. "I like to turn a corner and find something unexpected."

When she and her husband, Doug, bought their 1960s Provençal style ranch house eight years ago, the house, in many ways, was more than dated, complete with gold-speckled laminate countertops in the kitchen. But Burgess saw far more potential than pitfalls. "We bought the house because of the backyard," she says of the deep, shaded lot. "We feel removed from the city, yet we're still right in the heart of Buckhead."

Their first order of business was to gut the kitchen and open its windowless breakfast room with French doors to take advantage of the view of the backyard. They later added what has become their favorite spot in the house, a

LEFT: Landscape engravings by William Kent form a backdrop for an early 18th-century French sideboard of bleached oak. An antique American linen bed coverlet overlays the table. **PREVIOUS PAGES:** The study illustrates designer Betty Burgess' love of black-and-white art, including lithographs, etchings, and paintings framed in various ways. Burgess shares a free moment with granddaughter Nya; the antique frame came from a flea market in Paris.





In the living room, a pair of 19th-century French chairs flank a tuxedo sofa upholstered in linen velvet.

screened porch with a vaulted ceiling off the breakfast room. Atlanta architect Bill Litchfield designed the porch to look aged, with wide-plank wood floors and a wood ceiling, and Burgess decorated it with casual furniture, including an old daybed converted into a sofa and a ship's porthole made into a mirror. "We wanted it to feel traditional but fresh," she says. "Bill was so smart about including certain elements, such as the brick in the fireplace hearth, that make the space look like it was here all along."

Burgess extended that classic style throughout the rest of the house, where sea grass wallcoverings and linen-white paint lend a neutral backdrop to a collection of mainly French antiques and black-and-white art. In the living room, where three shades of gray paint were blended to create just the right wall color, lithographs, sketches, and charcoals complement a tuxedo sofa in brown linen velvet. "I like a room to feel elegant with traditional pieces, such as a wing chair, but then I'll cover the furniture

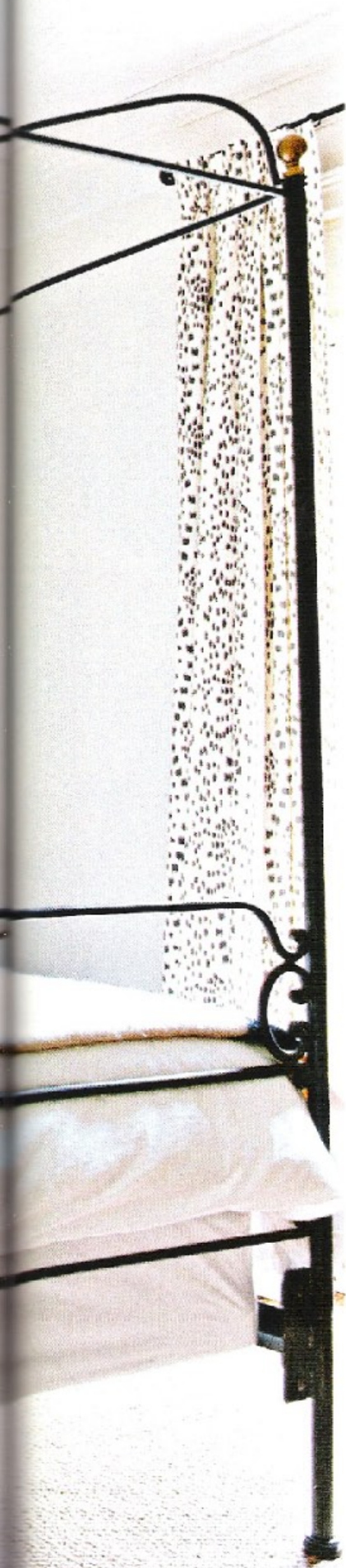


ABOVE: In the breakfast room, which extends to the screened back porch, the 19th-century French chandelier above an old farm table can be used with both candles and electricity. "The fixture is my favorite thing in the whole world," Burgess says. **RIGHT:** The porch addition is designed to look traditional but with an edge, Burgess says. An old daybed was converted into a sofa. Screened openings are trimmed in a green-black color to emphasize the view of the shaded backyard.









LEFT: In the guest room, English silhouettes framed in black surround the iron canopy bed. BELOW: A 19th-century barley twist hall chair stands out in the pristine white bath. Burgess arranged a collection of watercolors and charcoals in antique frames for added patina.



with more relaxed fabrics, such as linen or wool," she says.

Her collection of 31 framed 18th-century landscape engravings by William Kent hangs in the dining room, where panels and moldings with a semigloss finish add dimension and a sense of age to the walls.

"For me, it's all about texture," says Burgess, who previously worked with Atlanta designer Dan Carithers. "Dan is my mentor. The most valuable thing I learned from him was the use of color—and how to use it with restraint. I put that into practice here at home, and the result is really peaceful." ♦

For details, see Sourcebook, page 178.

See how Betty Burgess upholstered one chair three ways on page 30.