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COLLABORATIVE CURATORS

Designer and homeowners discover a mutual love of the collected and colorful

by **Diane L. Cormany**
photos by **Susan Gilmore**



"Sumacs," by local artist James Wilcox Dimmers, continues the vibrant colors.



LEFT Collected treasures give the living room eclectic personality.

ABOVE The remodeled kitchen accommodates two homeowners who love to cook.

CREATIVE COLLABORATIONS—LIKE ALL CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS—deepen as partners find mutual inspiration. Interior designer Sandy LaMendola, principal of Twist Interior Design in Minneapolis, and long-time clients Mary Daschner and Dan Chowen evolved their design partnership for more than a decade.

During this time, the couple filled their passports and gathered decorative arts both near and far. To complement their spirit of adventure, LaMendola introduced vibrant colors and layers into their home—a look that some find intimidating.

Not Daschner. She is open to exploration, relaxed, and easy to partner with, says LaMendola. "She likes to discover and learn about design at the same time."

Their collaboration came about serendipitously. The couple bought the house when they moved back to Minneapolis from Evanston—with just 36 hours to find a home. Though they knew the kitchen was far too tiny for their lifestyle, which includes entertaining and cooking for a large extended family, the Cedar-Isles-Dean neighborhood and the home's traditional bones won the day.

Architect Tim Quigley remodeled the kitchen and suggested LaMendola help with the finishing touches. As Quigley defined an elegant and cook-friendly layout from a former garage, LaMendola guided selections for everything from the granite countertop to the light fixtures to the cabinet pulls. She spent time getting to know both Chowen and Daschner's preferences and their shared desire to put their new kitchen to work. "This is not a show kitchen; we both love to cook," Daschner explains, lauding the functional and aesthetic appeal of the finishes, colors, and details.

The connection between designer and clients was immediate, and their successful collabora-

REVISIONS

tion paved the way for the next project. “Once we did the kitchen, we couldn’t get anybody out of the kitchen,” Daschner says, laughing. To make the living room a more inviting draw for guests, Quigley improved the flow from the kitchen through to the front of the house. He also enhanced the connection to a front sunroom, which was insulated for year-round use. LaMendola suggested a fireplace, once awkwardly buried by stucco in a previous remodel, get a new look: a granite surround, along with a painted mantel whose scalloped brackets echo the room’s arched doorway.

From there, the design takes a “left turn,” LaMendola explains, with a panoply of colors and textures. The eclectic and surprising effect complements the living room’s traditional bones. And all is “Sonny-friendly” to accommodate the couple’s beloved Boston terrier.

While many homeowners opt for furniture sets and matching colors, LaMendola says,



a layered look is a truer expression of the many interests and personalities that we all embody. Daschner and Chowen’s interests are visible on each wall and surface of their home. Many of the objets d’art have been gathered during their annual trips—a new destination for each of the 35 years they have been married, including Antarctica, Cambodia, and across Europe. Daschner doesn’t seek out any single style or medium. Instead, she explains, “I enjoy trying to find a piece that evokes the memory of the experience that I’m having. I like especially if I can meet the artist, which oftentimes I’m able to do.”

A rich scarlet and gold silk and cashmere

LEFT From nondescript to wow: The master bedroom now features a richly textured wallpaper, fanciful upholstered bed, and—still—a gallery wall of framed photos beloved by the homeowners.

throw recalls memories of Jaipur, India. A unique vessel made of hand-painted camel bone overlaid on wood represents Udaipur, India. A vibrant painting of three women captures Cuba with its colors and cigars in the subjects’ mouths. The couple’s extensive collection also includes several pieces from local artist James Wilcox Dimmers, whose painting “Sumacs” hangs above a graphic cabinet in the living room.

This embrace of the new and the beautiful inspired LaMendola through the trio’s 13-year association, which touched every room in the home. “We’ve really grown together on the projects,” she explains. Daschner simply regrets their collaboration has come to a pause, since the house—for now—is complete. ❏

DIANE L. CORMANY is a Robbinsdale writer.

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