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study in contrasts

OLD WORLD ARCHITECTURE HOUSES A FUNKY INTERIOR PERFECT FOR A TAMPA FAMILY
+ STORY **PATTI ROTH** + PHOTOGRAPHY **AMY MILLER**

Lots of homeowners enthusiastically stick to a specific design theme. Then there's the Harmon family. Their freshly remodeled Tampa home features distinct personalities.

The outside exudes a grand Old-World European flavor. An abundance of arches and ornamental elements highlight the

intentionally asymmetrical front façade. Architect David Balber of Tampa-based David Balber Architecture describes it as an interpretation of a formal, Italianate style. The motif includes such characteristic detailing as intricate appliques, corbels and banding. The asymmetrical look is reminiscent, he says, of an >>

Clockwise from below left: Reupholstered thrift-store chairs; the kitchen features a 13-foot island; a retro feel in the dining nook.



>> old-fashioned countryside home that's been added to in various stages. "When you look at the house, you think you'll walk into a very traditional home," DeAnna Harmon acknowledges. Still, she didn't let such expectations dictate her approach to the décor. Both she and her husband, Tom, adore their Mediterranean-style exterior, but the inside is all about uncluttered lines and a quirky blend of vibrant hues and mix-and-match furniture.

It was a nudge from Marilyn Perez, design director of HomeWorks Builders in Tampa, that released Harmon from the notion that she needed to adhere to a consistent style. And that's when decorating became a pleasure. "I went with the look I wanted instead of what I thought it needed to be," she says. "I love the unexpected. That's what is so neat about it."

Her cohorts heartily agree.

"The inside meshes with the outside, just in the fact that they're both very well thought out," says Balber. "It's so personal how people decorate their houses as opposed to the exterior. That's where [most] people want to be more mainstream."

In decorating the interior of her family home, Harmon's approach revolved around selecting prized pieces without allegiance to any particular style. Working with Perez and decorator Doreen Bissonnette of Doreen Bissonnette Interiors in Tampa, Harmon accomplished the multifaceted look with a neat sense of simplicity. Contemporary elements blend with pieces that fit a variety of styles, including what Bissonnette refers to as Hollywood Regency. "As people walk through, it's constant 'oohs' and 'aahs.'" >>





The pleasing symmetry of the arches enhances the view from the lanai. Below: The game room has a masculine feel with dark blue walls.

>> Perez says, "DeAnna definitely personalized her space with pieces that she loves." The various highlights include a five-tiered glass Lightolier chandelier in the foyer that's from the 1970s and an antique Buddha sculpture that sits on a vintage chocolate shipping crate in the office.

Some features are inspired by stylish hotels in South Beach. Others were picked up at thrift stores, recovered and then made to work with designer elements. Bissonnette's role involved balancing and harmonizing the array of colors and styles. For example, a curvy red Scan Design "pixel" sofa in the family room makes a strong statement, so to balance that, she suggested a velvety teal fabric for reupholstering thrift-store chairs. Between them is a mirrored



Regency Greek center table from Tampa's Casa Nova. The colorful print is an original Peter Max. Tying together the various hues in the room is a wavy striped Paul Smith rug. "There's a lot of color going on," Harmon says, who believes the interior is reflective of "a lot of personalities in the house."

Function is an essential element in the design. The extra-wide Quartzite island in the kitchen offers plenty of room for the family of six. In addition to a prep area and dishwasher, it boasts a built-in, glass-top desk. Lined up are six barstools with clear, sculptural seats that reflect Harmon's contemporary taste. In the dining nook, a "bubbles" Sonneman light hangs over the Pottery Barn table, where chartreuse Herman Miller chairs from Design Within Reach add a midcentury-modern touch.

In designing the renovation project, architect Balber says he also strived for a seamless flow between the old and new areas, while adding such amenities as an upstairs game room, a downstairs den with a pool table, an exercise room, a steam and sauna room, and a great room that lives up to its name. "You could land a plane in that thing," Balber declares. The outdoor area includes both a spacious lanai equipped with a gourmet kitchen and a separate intimate deck complete with a fireplace.

Even as the décor is multidimensional in style, the archways throughout the interior reflect a bit of the Mediterranean motif that's so prevalent on the exterior. Overall, though, the indoors and out portray distinctive charms, and that's fine for this happy family. davidbalberarchitecture.com, homeworksbldrs.com