

festive Touches

DESIGNER TRACI ZELLER KEEPS THE DETAILS OF HER HOME SPECIAL AND PERSONALIZED WHILE MAKING SPACE FOR HOLIDAY CHEER.

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Every interior designer has their own unique approach to helping clients achieve their dream home, but what measures do they take when it comes to dressing and furnishing their personal spaces? For Traci Zeller, being surrounded by beautiful things is important, but more than anything, she believes a home should feel like a sanctuary and a place to rejuvenate. “I love to be social, but I am a homebody at heart,” says Zeller. “It just feels good being in a pretty place, and I think subconsciously there’s something that feels better about being in a well-designed space. I wanted my house to feel like that, but at the same time, I needed it to be comfortable and not like a museum.”

Nestled in a small development just four miles from downtown Charlotte, North Carolina, Zeller shares her home with her husband and 13-year-old twin sons. Magnificent trees form a canopy over the street the house resides on, and a stone wall—custom built by stone masons from the North Carolina mountains—wraps around the development. With a love of all things French and a passion for mixing antiques with modern pieces, Zeller says the home’s design evolution has taken place slowly since she and her husband purchased the property in 2003. “We’ve done a little renovating and updating over the years—most recently the master bathroom—but I’m a designer, so



Previous pages: Zeller knew she wanted a holiday color palette that coordinated with her soft pink sofa. Using similar shades along with merlots and neutrals, she and Smith dressed the tree and adorned the mantel with fresh greenery. Opposite top to bottom: Using hand-died silk ribbon and greenery, Smith created a lush garland for the staircase. In the dining room, Zeller and Smith painted dried magnolia gold and attached it to the backs of the chairs with double-faced satin ribbon. This page: A simple wreath graces the home’s front door while festive touches add holiday flair to the entryway.



Above: The bright white kitchen is given subtle and classic pops of Christmas cheer with double window wreaths that hang from pink ribbon. Left and below: Because the home does not have a formal living room, Zeller says the living room serves as the family's living room and gets the most traffic. "I tend to play with its design a decent bit, but I love this recent incarnation so much I don't know that I'll have the heart to change it much now," she says. "The furniture upholstery is Sierra Lane and the pink sofa is Sunbrella."





I'm always tweaking things a little bit," she says.

While Christmastime brings a full social schedule and party-packed weekends to Zeller and her family, the designer spends a large part of her time ensuring her clients' projects are finished and their holiday needs are met. To make sure her own home got the festive attention it deserved, Zeller enlisted the help of Ashley Smith of Pagoda Event Design to put together Christmas décor that she could enjoy and feel good about while entertaining. "I decided to work with Ashley because, while I love the holidays, during that time I am busy and get tired," says Zeller. "I asked her to help me put Christmas together in a way that I could love, the way I love the rest of my house."

Zeller and Smith took cues from the sofa in the living room and created a Christmas color palette of soft pinks and deep merlots. Using the nontraditional colors to dress the tree, Smith layered items Zeller already had—including Eiffel Tower ornaments and antique intaglios—with textured ribbon, metallic accents, and a sunburst mirror tree topper. "When you design someone's home for Christmas, it should reflect their personality and help elevate what they've already incorporated," says Smith. "I got to know Traci and her work as well as her interests, and that made it easy to personalize the design to her."

Understated nods to the season and plenty of fresh



Opposite: The sunny breakfast room features a 60-inch round custom tablecloth that uses fabric from textile designer Isobel Mills. Zeller says her love for the fabric became instrumental in how her Christmas design came together because of its color and texture.



Left: The master bedroom features small nods to Christmas that don't overpower the tranquil atmosphere of the space. "I love a well-designed master bedroom," says Zeller. "It has definitely evolved over the years. Some of the more recent additions are the antique demilune and the bust. I feel that as much as your home is your sanctuary, your bedroom is even more so." Opposite: To create space for the floor to ceiling linen cabinet, Zeller decided to remove the bathtub during the master bathroom's recent renovation. "We didn't have any linen storage and it let me separate the vanities," she says. "I also got to do some blue cabinetry that I love."

greenery can be found throughout the home's décor. Sitting on an antique demilune in the master bedroom, a small wreath adorns a stone bust, while sprigs of greenery are tied to the bathroom sconces. Both Zeller and Smith claim the dining room featured their favorite details of the holiday décor, which included dried magnolia that was painted gold and attached to the backs of the chairs, and a floral arrangement bursting with vibrant peonies. "Christmas décor should not be invasive," says Smith. "I believe it should complement your daily life and help you celebrate that time of year without letting it take over your space."

