



**FRAMED SPACE.** Ashley placed two large magnolia wreaths and two oversized floral arrangements at the front door. The classic symmetry creates an elegant and traditional effect.

# Polished, *Pretty &* Peaceful

An interior designer's masterpiece is made even more magical during the holidays by an event designer's creative vision.

BY LAUREN HOFER  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DUSTIN PECK  
STYLING BY ASHLEY SMITH



**MADE TO MATCH.** Ashley used the drapery fabric as inspiration for the Christmas tree. "We brought in birch, garland and silk fans," she says. "There are different textures and different levels of style so that it's not too organic; it still has some sparkle to it."



## *What makes this North Carolina home's holiday decor truly remarkable*

is a combination of subtle, intentional details and over-the-top statements inspired by the home's original interior design. In this North Carolina spec home, the welcoming and comfortable interiors were designed by Traci Zeller of Traci Zeller Designs. "I generally think of my aesthetic and what I tend to do for my clients as modern classic," Traci says. "It's always polished, pretty and peaceful."

Traci approached the design with an initial focus on highlighting the home's existing architectural detail. She wanted to create the perfect floor plan and use fabrics that would accentuate the space and that her clients loved. "I wanted them to touch and see the fabrics," she says of the decision process. "We used all performance ... and hardworking fabrics, so it could really be a home that they live in and entertain in as well," she says. The result is a beautiful and comfortable space.

It was in this already welcoming environment that homeowners Katie and Marty Bryant decided to throw a holiday party, and at Traci's recommendation, they brought in the expertise of Ashley Smith with Pagoda Event Design to outfit the home for the event. "I was thrilled with how Ashley took the house that I had decorated and made it so festive," Traci says.

"When you have guests in your home, there has to be an element of comfort and an *element of surprise.*"

**WARM & INVITING.** Colors from the Roman window shades, the bright seat cushions and various floral arrangements seamlessly work to make the breakfast table a warm and lively place to gather.



The colors that intentionally both soften and **add life to the space** became the staples for the *Christmas decorations too.*



**GOING GREEN.** Ashley loves adding greenery to breakfast nooks and kitchens. It's especially perfect for parties because so often, that's where guests end up gathering. "It's one of the most overlooked areas," she says.

#### UNCONVENTIONAL COLORS

The color palette in the drapery panels and Roman shades that Traci selected brought an element of liveliness to the home and set the tone for the rest of the house. Instead of bringing in the classic reds and greens so often associated with the holidays, Ashley went in another direction with the design and pulled from the color schemes Traci originally chose for the home. Greens, corals and other colors that intentionally both soften and add life to the space became the staples for Christmas decorations too.

## Using All the Senses

Home décor during the holidays is more than just a visual experience. "You have to touch on all the senses for the holidays; people are so busy you have to grab their attention," says event designer Ashley Smith. Here are a few of her ideas for engaging guests in the experience of your home.

- 1. Light.** The warmth of Christmas lights creates a glowing and ethereal sense. "It just makes your heart happy," says Ashley.
- 2. Music.** While most people don't have to be reminded to play Christmas music, it is essential for creating a holiday experience, and there are so many different stylistic possibilities.
- 3. Baking Smells & Tastes.** There's no better way to make people feel at home during the holidays than the warm smells wafting from the kitchen.
- 4. Greenery.** The visual picture and the fresh scent of live greenery around your home is truly transformative.
- 5. Fabrics.** Soft, high-quality fabrics add comfort and warmth to any room.





From ornaments and gift wrap to place settings and more, the holiday elements all work in tandem with the existing décor, creating a feeling of cohesion throughout the space. Traci's beautiful color palette for the décor scheme evokes a rich but relaxed setting, thanks to classic detailing like contrast piping and tailored lines. Traci's mix of vibrant pattern and elegant furnishings with traditional shapes and chic silhouettes gives the home a fresh appeal. "We wanted to really incorporate the beautiful fabrics that Traci had picked out for the home, so I tried to draw in a lot of the apricot and blush tones," Ashley says.

**COLOR STORY.** While blush tones are a theme throughout the house, in the elegant dining room they stand out with subtle touches of green.





The unique interplay of Traci's design and the holiday décor is most evident in the dining areas, where the colors and floral arrangements work together to create holiday magic. "I really love embracing the décor you have and making slightly unconventional colors feel festive," says Traci of her appreciation for the finished product.

#### GRACIOUS DESIGN

Because Ashley was designing for a holiday party, the approach was event focused. "When you design for a party, it's a little bit

different than when you design for a family," she says. "It starts with the welcome at the front door, which sets the tone for the rest of the house." Ashley describes that welcoming feeling as gracious design. "When you have guests in your home, there has to be an element of comfort and an element of surprise," she says, "something they're not expecting that just takes it to the next level visually."

Two large magnolia wreaths gracing the front door set a welcoming tone that is reinforced in the entry, where a massive, handmade garland is draped over the banister. "The greenery is over the top,"

Ashley says. "You don't have to have a two-foot-wide garland on your staircase, but it celebrates the beauty and it's stunning." Additionally, with the exquisite materials and styling Traci chose for the space, the single motif was the perfect way to underscore the design.

#### TELLING A STORY

Ashley used the same classic, southern magnolia branches from the wreaths throughout the home in various arrangements and brought in other unique details that show Katie's unique geographic story.

"She is from California originally, so we did pomegranates on the tree," Ashley says. "It's combining her past self and her present self."

Traci and Ashley agree that with warmth, brightness and intentionality the interior design and holiday décor of the home exemplify the spirit of the season as well as the welcoming character of the individuals who live there. **CB**

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**JUST FOR YOU.**  
Unique, personal and handmade floral arrangements like this one are the finishing touch to any dining table design.