



Style Overhaul

Antique and Modern Mix in New Jersey

Story by Jessica Rivest | Photography by Peter Rymwid



The living room is the perfect blend of treasured antique pieces the clients love and new pieces to complete their redesign.



Valerie Grant of Valerie Grant Interiors prides herself on customizing and tailoring her designs to the desires of each individual client. Her work with this New Jersey family is a perfect example. The homeowners' changing style and their kids becoming teenagers made the clients realize that functionality trumps formality. "The clients wanted a home that felt more comfortable and inviting—something they could enjoy with their kids and reflected their own personal style," says Valerie. So they planned a redesign of their too-formal home to something with a more modern feel that was authentic to how they really lived with two teenagers in the house.

"Often, when a young couple sets out to decorate their new home, they feel the need for it to seem 'grown-up,' so they gravitate toward a very formal or traditional look," says Valerie. "Once they live there for a few years and their children get a little older, they realize that 'grown-up' can include a whole spectrum of looks, and they embark on a redesign." She worked with the couple to redesign the entire home, including two home offices and the teenagers' hangout room, mixing their existing traditional pieces with more modern ones to create a beautiful effect.

The project didn't start as a whole house redesign, but quickly evolved into that. "The couple originally hired me to update the

living room and dining room," Valerie recalls, "but once they started to see how the look of their home was evolving, they wanted the remaining rooms to feel like they were part of the same home, with a more modern look. Overall, the project took 12 months to complete." A whole house redesign is a daunting task, but Valerie used her years of design experience to meet the challenge. She and the clients went room by room to create the updated look they were striving for, and Valerie says the project went off without a hitch. "There were no disagreements with the clients," she says. "They were incredibly easygoing and trusting throughout the process."

Valerie's design process started in the dining room, where she mixed some modern pieces among the gorgeous antiques to create a stunning blend of styles. The clients wanted to keep the existing dining table and chairs, antique cabinet and amazing chandelier. To update the room, Valerie added beautiful color and interest to the walls by using a Venetian plaster with a waxed topcoat to make them really stand out. She used a softened metallic two-color glaze on the ceiling to create a unique look and bring focus to the chandelier. She added an updated the server and a more modern mirror. The updated drapery in a modern pattern and new rug help pull together all the elements and blend the traditional and modern pieces.

In the living room, Valerie again used a softened metallic two-col-





or glaze on the ceiling to continue the flow from the dining room. She also added a printed grasscloth on the walls. Next was the mantel design and the trim details in the room. Valerie says she updated the mantel to better reflect the clients' style, and worked with them to scale back the trim details so every piece in the room fit with the overall design feel and look they wanted. "The room is a perfect blend of the antique pieces they treasured and new pieces to modernize the look," says Valerie. She reupholstered some pieces of furniture to make them fit better with the new design and update their appearance. A dramatic ceiling fixture and beautiful original painting on canvas by renowned street artist Retna add a little flair and are great focal points in the room.

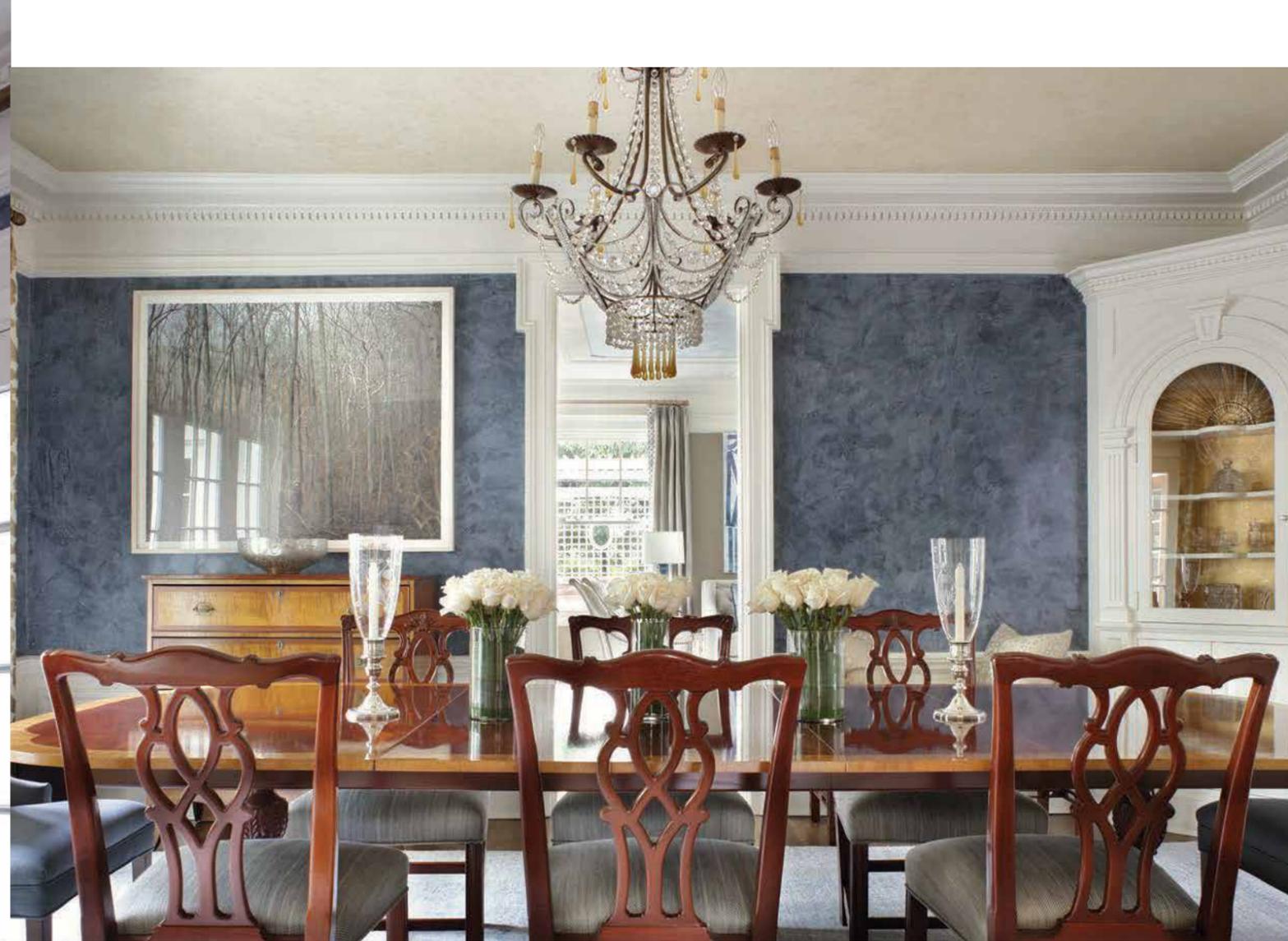
The sitting room already featured eye-catching built-ins, which Valerie complemented with a modern turquoise grasscloth on the walls. The clients wanted to keep the stunning ceiling fixture

and coffee table in this room, so Valerie worked with those pieces and added a new sofa, chairs, side table, rug and window treatments to complement them. She chose the pieces so that the sitting room felt like an extension of the living room. To add a special custom detail to the sitting room, the ceiling was stenciled using a varnish tinted with mica powders for an iridescent look. The foyer was also updated with modern, subtle graphic wallpaper and a complementing patterned rug. In this area, the clients wanted to keep the bench and demilune they loved, so Valerie added a large, beautiful, modern mirror to create the modernized look the clients were looking for.

The kitchen had recently been renovated, but still needed some work to make it fit with the redesign of the home. Valerie updated the breakfast table by refinishing the top to give it a two-tone look; she also added new chairs and a dramatic lantern light fix-



The stunning existing antique chandelier is the focal point of the dining room, while the mirror gives the room a modern feel.



ture above the table. The details of the lantern make it the focal point of the room: its interior is painted to match the ceiling, which is a gorgeous metallic Venetian plaster in a beautiful pale blue.

The home features “his and her” offices, which were included in the redesign. For “his” office, Valerie kept all the original, handsome built-ins and furniture, but reupholstered the chairs to update the room. She changed the window treatments to one with a modern pattern that complements and does not compete with the beautiful original artwork by renowned street artists Faile and Shepard Fairey. She also customized the ceiling by creating a modern interpretation of a tin ceiling, using a metallic glaze and a custom-cut stencil to create the unique look. “Her” office got an overhaul of the furnishings to update the look. Valerie kept the original wallpaper, but painted the paneling and trim in a Fine Paints of Europe high-gloss charcoal finish. Modernized the existing window treatments and added a new rug bring the look of the office redesign full circle.

The couple’s two teenaged kids needed their space to be updated as well. Originally the room featured built-ins with a desk incorporated into the design, but that didn’t fit with what the

teenagers wanted for their space. “This room was probably the biggest challenge,” says Valerie. “Now that the kids were older, they wanted a room they could hang out in with their friends.” To provide the teens with a cool yet sophisticated space, Valerie kept the two tall shelving units on either side of the built-in, but replaced the center desk with a built-in daybed with a trundle bed. The walls of the room were painted in a custom stripe detail, and a store-bought ceiling fixture was customized to give it a more updated look. Valerie also added new furniture to the room, including stylish blue chairs and ottoman, modern white chairs, and a clean, modern rug and window treatments. The redesign of the kids’ space provides them with a cool hangout place that can continue to grow with them for the next several years.

Once the redesign process on the rest of the house was underway, the couple decided they wanted their bedroom to get a new look as well. Valerie created a clean, modern, tranquil bedroom oasis for her clients. First she took down the old wallpaper and fashioned a custom, hand-finished metallic glazed stencil for the walls, which beautifully complements the already glazed ceiling. She then updated the existing blue-patterned window treatments, giving the room a feeling of tranquility, and an eye-catching ceiling fixture that complements the large, gorgeous, mixed-medium



Handsome built-ins in the home office are the perfect backdrop for original artwork by renowned street artists Faile and Shepard Fairey.

piece of art by renowned artist Sage Vaughn, which then became the focal point of the room.

Valerie says this project stands out for her because it was a cohesive marriage of existing and new pieces, as well as a blend of traditional and more modern styles, to create a beautifully designed space. “The biggest challenge was creating a fresh, modern design while incorporating some of the existing furniture—some antique and some more traditional,” she says. “I accomplished this by reupholstering some existing pieces and mixing traditional with more modern ones—a combination I think makes this home feel authentic, like they had accumulated the pieces over the years.” Valerie also focused on adding custom-design touches throughout the home. “I have always liked to customize pieces and create special finishes on surfaces,” she says, “whether they be wall/ceiling surfaces or custom specialty finishes on furniture. This project allowed me to utilize that process to add interest

and transform the look of the home.” She strives to transform each client’s vision into reality, she notes, with her passion for design at the heart of everything she does. Before establishing her own firm, Valerie spent over 15 years in the fashion industry, working as a senior merchandiser at renowned brands including Prada, Ralph Lauren, Coach and J. Crew. She honed her skills in fashion while catering to a broad range of customers, and uses that experience and her love for interior design in every home design project. Valerie specializes in customizing and tailoring selections to the aesthetic and budget of each individual client, making each project distinctive, personal and creatively inspired. “Every project is a new experience; there is no set formula to the way I design,” she explains. “I listen to my clients and try to understand what is important to them and how I can help turn their desire into reality. Having traveled extensively through Europe and Asia on fashion buying

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Opposite Top: The kids’ hangout room features a built-in daybed with trundle, custom striped paint, and cool chairs and ottoman.



The updated master bedroom is the picture of tranquility with its custom, hand-finished metallic glazed stencil on the walls and beautiful window coverings.

trips, I find my inspiration comes from many different places. From a beautiful hand-knotted rug or luxurious fabric, to a whimsical trim or a unique piece of art, one piece can set the foundation for a room, and everything else evolves from that. I begin by finding the key elements that will make the room function properly and comfortably, and then layer in pieces that will personalize and bring the space to life.”

Valerie’s transition from the fashion world to interior design began over a decade ago. Her family built a home in East Hampton, NY, and she immersed herself in all aspects of the project, including designing cabinetry and selecting furniture, lighting, tile, plumbing fixtures, window treatments and more. Soon after that, visitors were asking her for advice and help with their own design projects. Valerie studied interior design at Parsons School of Design in NYC, and founded Valerie Grant Interiors in 2005. Combining her expertise in fashion with her innate talent and passion for home design, she creates beautiful spaces for all her clients.

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