

# HOME & DESIGN

## *Fall Makeovers!*

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UPDATES  
WITH STYLE**

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HOME ON  
THE BAY**



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British Ambassador's  
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In the family room's dining area (these pages), bold, abstract artwork from Merritt Gallery establishes the intense color scheme. Fabric by Lee Jofa adorns the host chair and the custom credenza is by Bolier. White marble floors keep the space bright and airy.



# STAR QUALITY

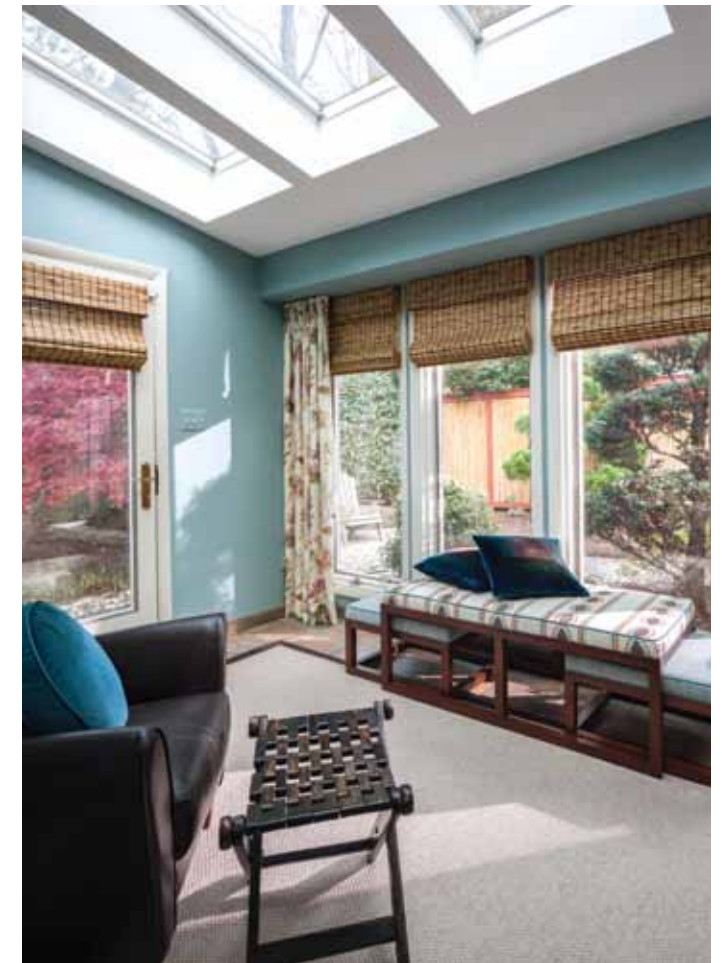
Andrea Houck refashions Sandra Bullock's childhood home to reflect the vibrant style of its new owners

By JENNIFER SERGENT | PHOTOGRAPHY BY LYDIA CUTTER



Electronic shades control light and heat in the family room (this page) and the sunroom (opposite), where skylights bring nature inside. In the family room, drapery panels by Osborne & Little complement orange leather swivel chairs by Willem Smith.

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It all started with a gossip column. Anne Harkavy and David Ogden were looking for a home in the Arlington neighborhood where they were married when Ogden's daughter noted an item in the newspaper about the childhood home of actress Sandra Bullock: It was for sale—blocks from where the ceremony took place. “We went to see it on a lark because it was in the neighborhood, but then we really liked it,” Harkavy recalls.

The couple, both attorneys, bought the house from Bullock's father. Provenance aside, however, they faced tough challenges in transforming the aging split-level. The goal was to create a lively home in which to raise their young daughter as well as space for easy entertaining. They also needed to accommodate visits from Ogden's two grown children.

Over the next few years, the couple added a pop-up addition, updated the kitchen and painted most of the rooms—but the look and functionality they were after continued to elude them. Finally, they called on Arlington designer Andrea Houck for help.

Houck's mission was to address the color scheme and general flow throughout the home's main living spaces, repurposing her clients' existing furniture when possible. She started with the living room, which Harkavy and Ogden had converted from a dining area. Open to the foyer and the kitchen, the space is visible from many different angles. “The room felt really square and not very conversational. I knew it was wrong, but we couldn't figure out how to fix it,” Harkavy recalls.

INTERIOR DESIGN: ANDREA HOUCK, A. Houck Designs, Arlington, Virginia.



“We appreciate how Andrea ‘got’ us. She was able to figure out what we wanted even though we couldn’t describe it.” —ANNE HARKAVY

“There was no flow,” agrees Houck. “We had to think outside the box,” referring to the traditional sofa-and-two-chairs arrangement. “If a room is too narrow and you can’t make a sofa work,” the designer reasons, “it’s much better to just do chairs.” So she moved the sofa to the master bedroom and arranged four armchairs around a grouping of cylindrical accent tables. This new plan ensures that the fireplace and adjoining spaces are equally visible from all sides.

There was also a geometry problem in the adjacent, window-lined family room. The owners use the room as both a daily gathering spot and a dining area that accommodates guests during holiday season. But the space was out of kilter, dominated by an oversized, square sectional while the round dining table was too small. “I didn’t want a square sectional in a square room,” Houck observes. “We needed some circles.” So she moved the sectional to the lower level and replaced it with a smaller, curved sofa paired with a round, custom coffee table.

To emphasize the dining area, she beefed up the scale of the table by adding extra leaves and further defined the space with bold artwork and a new credenza. She also repurposed a trio of pendant lights from the kitchen to hang over the dining table, where they echo the strong palette that now enlivens the room.



Houck united the living room (pictured here) and adjacent kitchen using similar patterns and textures, including a bar-base tile (opposite) from Architectural Ceramics, upholstery by Larsen and sheers by Zimmer + Rohde. Wood accents include a custom mantel by Michael James and a cluster of tables by Willem Smith.



On the lower level, richly veined Eramosa marble surrounds the fireplace (left). Houck designed custom built-ins that house A/V equipment, along with Sandra Bullock's 1970s-era McIntosh stereo. Near the new aquarium (below), large floor pillows beckon the owners' young daughter while a pendant light by Nuevo hangs above the Tulip Table (bottom), where the family plays games.



According to Harkavy, the inspiration for the color scheme in the living and family rooms was the stained-glass panels in the front door that was given to the couple as a wedding gift. "Andrea worked cooler and calmer versions of these colors—blue and green—into the living room, and brighter versions of them into the family room," she says, adding, "We appreciate how Andrea 'got' us. She was able to figure out what we wanted even though we couldn't describe it."

On the lower level, Houck separated the wide-open space into zones: a sophisticated spot for watching TV; an area for casual meals or playing games; and—equally important—room for a built-in aquarium that Ogden had always wanted.

Houck started with the couple's existing furniture, including

Mid-Century Modern end tables and a coffee table Harkavy inherited from her grandparents. "Those tables are very cool," she says. "They were a jumping-off point to create the look." The designer had them lacquered white, then paired them with the sectional from the family room and another existing chair, both reupholstered.

Located in a niche behind the sectional, a Saarinen Tulip Table reflects the Mid-Century theme, as does a set of reupholstered chairs repurposed from the upstairs dining area.

Houck created focal points at either end of the space. On one side, she covered an outdated fireplace surround with lavender-grained Eramosa marble and installed a new stone-lined gas fireplace. On the other side, an open area at the base of the stairs features the dramatic aquarium.

Since Houck got involved (she's still working on the upstairs bedrooms), Harkavy and Ogden can finally say their house is a true reflection of who they are and how they live. Yet it does contain a small reminder of its previous occupant: Sandra Bullock's '70s-era McIntosh stereo. Her father gave it to Harkavy and Ogden when they bought the house, and Houck designed niches above the downstairs TV to display the components. The new owners refer to it as "Sandy's hi-fi." ❖

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*For before photos, see [homeanddesign.com](http://homeanddesign.com).*

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