

# MODERN MANOR

INSPIRED BY THE GREAT ENGLISH ESTATES OF THE 18TH CENTURY, ARCHITECT CHRIS REEBALS AND INTERIOR DESIGNER JOANNA GOODMAN BLUR THE LINE BETWEEN CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY FOR A YOUNG FAMILY IN BRIARWOOD.

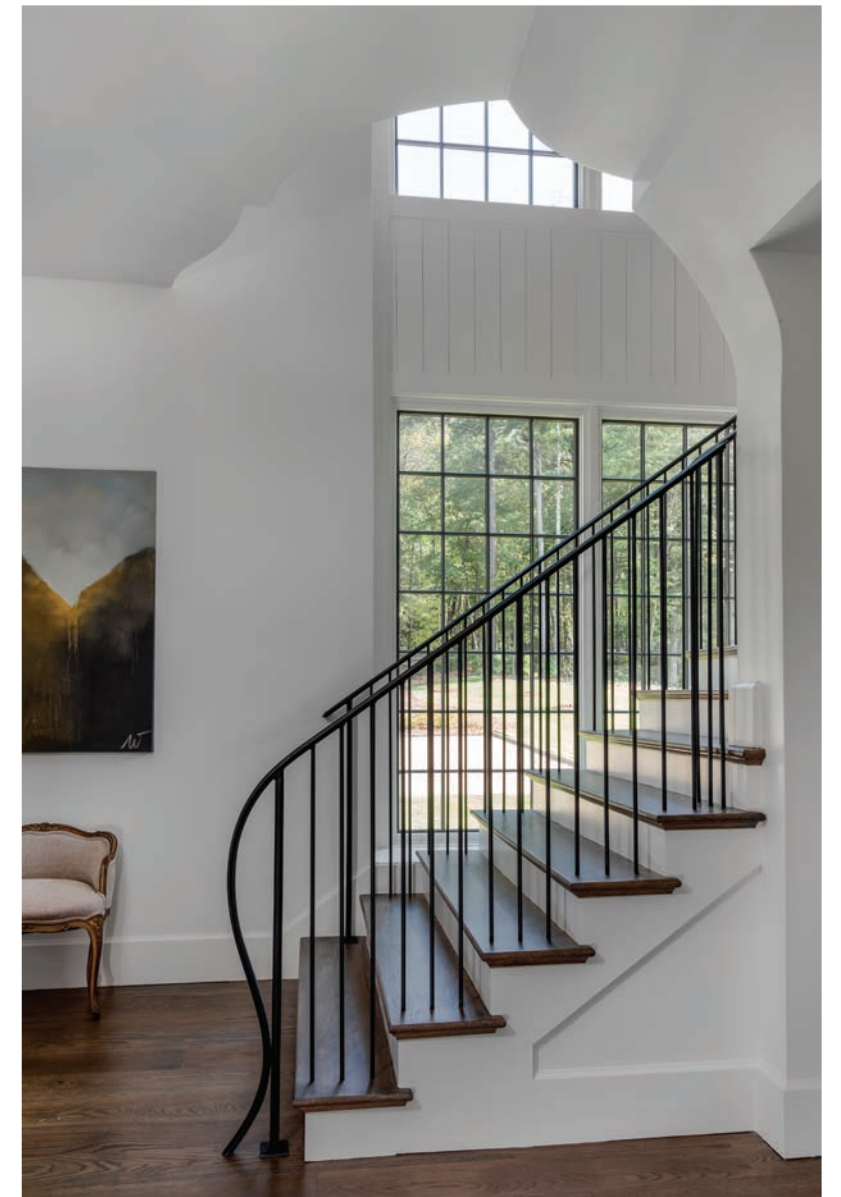
*Text and Styling by MARGARET ZAINY ROUX  
Photography by KERRY KIRK*

The open-air gazebo with outdoor fireplace, gas lanterns, and fan is designed for year-round use. The zero-edge pool spills out to the terraced lawn planned by landscape architect Dave Eyrich of Environmental Design Studio.



The crisp, manicured landscape keeps all eyes on the architecture and the surrounding natural splendor. The mix of earthen elements like gravel, wood, and stone lays the groundwork for the structure with towering windows and high-pitched rooflines that soar toward the treetops.

OPPOSITE: The slight curve in the wrought-iron handrail mimics the ogee-edged cased opening above it.



**W**alking the grounds of this idyllic Briarwood estate, it is easy to forget that the Birmingham city limit is just a few minutes away—and that was exactly architect Chris Reebals' intention. The newly built manor situated toward the back of a quiet cul-de-sac can only be reached after meandering through miles of massive oaks, towering pines, and green pastures. For the young family who lives there, the whole experience makes "coming home" feel like going on vacation.

"Before we began the design process, I planted myself onsite to absorb the aura of the 14-acre property," Chris says. "I spent several days contemplating how to design a respectful architectural response that would speak to nature while also capturing the vision of our client. They were my two greatest influences, both inspiring in their own way."

Chris, founder and principal of Christopher Architects and Interiors (CAI), collaborated with Cotton Construction to build a foundation strong enough to carry the weight of both classic and contemporary architectural elements and

*“We countered the openness of the great room and kitchen with cozier, moodier spaces that are soothing and restful—providing our clients a much-needed respite from the business of the day.”*

—Leigh Ann Harris, designer / Christopher Architects and Interiors



ABOVE: The centerpiece of the study is the dual-sided fireplace that separates the cozy space from the lofty great room. Coupled with the Wellon Bridgers abstract landscape and the brass chandelier, the pecky cypress paneled ceiling warms up the gray-blue paneled walls and trim. The Bakari rug from Christopher Collection is topped with a white hide for added texture.

materials. Limestone parapet walls, richly-stained cedar siding, and high-pitched shingle roofs nod to the work of renowned 18th-century English architect Sir Edward Lutyens, while sleek steel and shiny glass illustrate 21st-century style. Although the sprawling facade imbues a sense of grandeur and formality, the interiors convey an atmosphere of approachable

elegance as ideally suited for business dinners and cocktail parties as it is for family dinners at the kitchen island and backyard barbecues with friends.

“When designing a home, there is much more to think about than just the finishings and furnishings,” says Joanna Goodman, who served as the lead interior designer for CAI before establishing her

eponymous firm. “Before you can get there, you must understand how the rooms will connect with one another, how those who live there will connect with the rooms, and how the indoor rooms will connect to the outdoor ‘rooms.’ This knowledge is vital to creating functional, comfortable, and enjoyable spaces that look and feel right.”

This very sentiment served as the “blueprint” for the interior floorplan which is centered on the great room. Its two-story volume is amplified by stacked, steel-clad windows and French doors that frame Mother Nature’s artwork and flood the space with enough sunlight to warm the otherwise cool palette of grays, taupes, blacks, and whites. The dual-sided

limestone fireplace, white oak beams, and painted pine-paneled ceiling and walls anchor the lofty room.

According to Joanna, texture played an important role throughout the entire house, both in the interior architecture and in the décor. Its presence is noted in the pecky cypress ceilings in the library and master bedroom, the sleek stone



Measuring nearly 8 feet by 7 feet, the island serves up ample surface space for meal prep and creates a casual gathering spot. A wide expanse of steel-clad windows illuminates the kitchen, along with brass library sconces and brass-lined pendants. For cohesion, the finish is reverberated in the cabinet hardware and range hood straps.



counters and steel range hood in the kitchen, and the upholstery, rugs, and wallcoverings.

Interior designer Leigh Ann Harris worked with Joanna to procure textiles that are as easy on the eye as they are to the touch. Nubby wools and linens layered with smooth velvets, leathers, and hides are among the natural fibers that dress the floors and furnishings. Colored grass cloth and embossed wallcoverings round out the tactile mix. “Our goal was to generate all the ‘warm and fuzzy’ feels that make a ‘house’ feel like ‘home,’” Leigh Ann says. “Incorporating a diversity of rich textures in every room allowed us to achieve that goal organically and to convey depth in a subtle, sophisticated way that keeps the focus on the scenery.”

TOP: Sumptuous seating in high-performance velvet encourages guests to linger a little longer around the reclaimed Russian oak dinner table from Restoration Hardware. The wine closet allows the homeowners’ collection to become part of the artwork.

RIGHT: Antiqued mirror tiles paired with brass shelves and hardware shimmer in the cavernous bar situated between the kitchen and the dining room.



Together, the subtle colors in the Vesela Baker abstract and the delicate strands of the Currey & Company Lucien chandelier fill the voluminous cathedral ceiling without taking away from the handsome white oak beams and painted pine paneling. Piles of natural, textural materials ranging from exotic shagreen to rustic hide keep the monochromatic palette from becoming monotonous.

*“Initially, the homeowners had different ideas—he wanted shiplap siding and neutral colors for a casual, beachy feel while she preferred a more sophisticated interior with lots of texture, pattern, and color. The result was a little bit of both.”*

—Joanna Goodman



The design scheme for the teen daughter's room began with the acrylic canopy bed by Bernhardt. An accent wall featuring Cowtan & Tout's Villa in Oyster drove the dreamy palette of silver and sage accented with touches of mirror and mercury glass.



Cotton Woodworks crafted 'his' and 'her' pecky cypress vanities that nestle at opposite ends of the primary bathroom, divided by a soaking tub. Their rustic finish and traditional toe-kick base is modernized by streamlined drawers and sleek brass pulls and sconces. Thibaut's Tobago Weave Wallpaper in Charcoal creates a rich backdrop for contemporary mirrors in acrylic and brass by Mirror Image Home.

## MATERIALS MATTER

A home should be designed to withstand the test of time—structurally and aesthetically. So when architect Chris Reebals embarks on a new project, he thinks beyond the move-in date. “I contemplate how the design will mature over time and how the architectural elements will weather,” he says. Here are a few materials with a track record of aging gracefully.

**Copper.** When exposed to the elements, the orangey metal oxidizes and develops an aqua green patina widely known as ‘verdigris.’ The rich finish is not only striking, it naturally

strengthens the metal against corrosion.

**Natural stone.** Over time, a velvety moss can develop on porous stone to produce an enchanting, fairy tale effect. The hint of color also helps highlight the green shades in the landscape.

**Unlacquered brass.** Without its protective coating, the shiny yellow metal can dull and form a brown patina that is often desirable to those seeking a lived-in look. Unlacquered brass is also lower maintenance than

its coated counterpart. It doesn't require the amount of polishing, and fingerprints are welcome.

**“Messy” mortar brick.** A “messy” mortar helps new brick mimic the splotchy look of brick and stone on centuries-old European castles.

**Reclaimed wood.** Reclaimed wood has major eco-friendly benefits, but its knots, scrapes, and nail holes are also character-building. They give it a special, storied quality that can be traced to its origin—often a deconstructed barn, ship, or building.