

PAST meets

Photographed by THOMAS LOOF



Walls upholstered in tweed by Cowtan & Tout establish a tone of warmth in the family room. Flexible seating includes three pairs of chairs to move around the room. Club chairs wear a brown-and-white print by Quadrille, and the armchair is covered in a Suzanne Rheinstein fabric.

PRESENT

FOR A FAMILY IN NASHVILLE, DESIGNER MARKHAM ROBERTS GAVE THEIR COLLECTED ANTIQUES A FRESH SPIN WITH BOLD TEXTILES AND COLORFUL CONTRASTS



The entry hall establishes an old world-meets-new theme. The Palm Stripe wallpaper is by Claremont, and the custom runner is by Beauvais. Markham had the floor stenciled in a Dalkeith medallion pattern.



MARKHAM

Roberts decorates a

house with a particularly soigné philosophy. He adheres to no strict rules, following his instinct and eye. "I approach a house room by room and look for whatever will work best," he says. For clients in Nashville, Markham gave their 1920s house a dramatic update, completely renovating the structure, while striving to make the house feel as though it had always been there.

"I wanted to make it look as though nothing at all had been done to it," he says. Moldings, doors, and windows all look original to the house, and even the modern kitchen has an old-house vibe. The rooms are filled with a dynamic mix of antiques and contemporary pieces. "It's nice to have things handed down from your family," says Markham. "But it was important in this house to mix those with

The Eric Cahan photograph and traditional tufted velvet sofa exhibit one of Markham's signature pairings. A modern white coffee table mingles easily with a pair of paisley-covered slipper chairs.

things that feel younger. These clients are in their 40s, with young children. They entertain a lot and needed a space that is a reflection of their lifestyle."

In the dining room, against dramatically lacquered blue walls, he mixed a Federal sideboard and Georgian dining table, the latter passed down from the wife's grandfather, with contemporary art and dining chairs that are upholstered for comfort. "We put in a Greek key console and hung the photograph over it to steer the room away from the antiques," he says. "That pull back and forth is nice."

Indeed, the mood changes dramatically as you move throughout the house, from the tweedy family room to the tailored living room and the cosseted bedrooms. Markham treated the family room like a lounge, with scattered chairs and sofas placed at a distance to encourage fluid arrangements. But the fabrics reflect English country influences as well as tribal motifs, perfectly illustrating Markham's great skill: stylish, youthful spaces with a reverence for the past.



A CHAT WITH MARKHAM ROBERTS



You're known for your disregard for strict design edicts. Do you have any rules at all? Just don't buy anything hideous! Really, it's just about making each room work.

Though you work primarily in New York,

you've got a foothold in Nashville too. How'd that work out?

I have friends in Nashville, and it's such a lovely, welcoming city. The people are super fun, food is delicious, the way of life easy and relaxing, and the place is beautiful.

Any restaurants you'd like to recommend?

BrickTop's is one of my all-time favorite restaurants anywhere. I also love City House and Burger Up. The Belle Meade Club also has really good food.

What do you like about working on old houses?

I've always been drawn to American architecture from the early 1900s to the 1940s. I was raised in a Tudor-style house, and you could have an English library next to a French living room.

Americans would blend those styles, and the houses were very much like Americans themselves, a great mix.

I hear you've been working on a book?

It's coming out this month from Vendome, called *Decorating: The Way I See It*. I start with the basics of floor plan and furniture

layout and work up to furniture selection.

The porch is unusual with that metal roof. Where'd you get that idea?

I was inspired by an estate in Amenia, New York, called Wethersfield. It was once owned by Chauncey Devereaux Stillman and is now a house museum. It has wonderful wrought-iron porches and balconies. This porch's roof is riveted

metal, and inside the wood slats are painted charcoal with a tinge of green. We added the fireplace for use year-round.

Walls lacquered in Vanderberg Blue by Benjamin Moore set off a vibrant mix of old and new. A silk taffeta pendant shade hangs over an antique Georgian dining table, bringing a dollop of color and playful accent.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Faux-graining on the library paneling amplifies the clubby atmosphere of the gathering space.





TOP: Markham gave the floor a faux-marble painted finish designed to conceal paw prints and visually reduce the expanse of floorspace. The range and hood are by Wolf. **BOTTOM:** Outdoor furniture from Restoration Hardware got custom treatment with a mix of fabrics. The sofa cushions are covered in canvas by Kravet; the chairs are in a Quadrille ikat printed on Sunbrella fabric. The pendant light is from Paul Ferrante.

French doors open from the breakfast room into the garden. White painted chairs nearly invisibly surround the owner's graceful antique breakfast table.



GET THE LOOK

TAKE DIRECTION FROM
MARKHAM'S EFFORTLESS MIX
OF FURNISHINGS
AND FLOURISHES

Get a youthful
vibe with a playful
fixture. Lotus-
Flower Chandelier
by Roost;
[vivaterra.com](#)

Shop the fabric
combo. Arbre de
Matisse Reverse
Brown on Off-White
by China Seas and
Shabby-Lin Délavé
by Pierre Frey.
Tape from Hobby
Lobby.

Unify varying
shapes with
color. Vases in
Turquoise;
[middlekingdom
porcelain.com](#)

Invest in a
future heirloom.
Philadelphia
Double Pedestal
Dining Table;
[hickorychair.com](#)

Keep floors
neutral with natural
fiber carpets.
Sisal Carpet;
[storkcarpet.com](#)

Use the dainty prints from
the daughter's room.
Dolly in Pink by Sister Parish and
Pasha Rose by Raoul Textiles. Trim
with Pink Coeur in Fuschia by
Brunschwig & Fils.

Create a jewel box
of a room with
an intense paint
color. Vanderberg
Blue (721);
[benjaminmoore.com](#)

Markham converted
a former sleeping porch into
a daughter's bedroom.
Blackout shades solve
the challenge of sleeping
in a room with three walls
of windows.

