

# Speaking Volumes

PIECES NEW AND OLD TRANSFORM  
A FAMILY HOME IN VIRGINIA



O.C. Builders  
McLean, Virginia





As a mature designer, Thomas Pheasant has stayed true to the early inspirations of his native Washington, D.C. He devises spaces for his clients that, if not quite on the scale of the National Gallery's voluminous rotunda, are based on the classical precedents of balance and order, even when the idiom is modern. "Everything I do," he says, "whether it's creating a floor plan, designing a piece of furniture or buying an antique, I approach with a sense of sculpture and simplicity."

Pheasant met his ideal client a number of years ago when he designed a residence for a woman who loved elegance and classicism and yearned for serenity. She was a very busy news anchor who had a 6:00 A.M. show and a CEO husband "who traveled all the time." She says, "We needed a lot of help." That house pleased the client and pleased the designer. "The palette was beige—very restful," she says. "I just assumed from then on that

I would always live in a beige house."

Time went by, however, and the couple had two children and acquired two dogs. "We needed a bigger house with special spaces for everybody." Searching with Pheasant, they found a house of minimal distinction standing on property that "offered the luxury of outdoor space," as Pheasant recalls. "It was hard to convince my client that a remake of this house would please her more than what she had. However, there is a beauty in working with people the second time. The trust level is very high."

Pheasant gutted the house. "That's what you do with Tom Pheasant—you start with a clean palette," says the client. "We raised the roof, allowing for light-filled French doors in a master bedroom that we created out of three small, dim rooms," says Pheasant, "and we brought the front wall out four feet, which allowed for a bay that expands the sense of space in the dining room." The resulting façade retained two

ABOVE: Twenty minutes from Washington, D.C., the 8,000-square-foot house stands on lushly wooded acreage that was landscaped by DCA Landscape Architects. RIGHT: Pheasant added a bay to brighten the entrance hall, where Luis Montoya and Leslie Ortiz's *Two Plums* is displayed with a pair of armillary spheres. Chairs, Thomas Pheasant for Baker.











end gables with symmetrical chimneys, while the center block of the house was new. Pheasant added second-floor windows and clad the façade in local stone, also designing a new porch and columns.

As for the décor, he says, "It would have been easy to replicate the beige paint and fabrics, but I got the client to talk about color. After a couple of weeks of thought, she went with it." He designed many pieces specially for the house, such as center tables with honed-marble tops in

the entrance hall, a sofa and love seat for the family room and, in the living room, a geometric low table that he paired with more classic curvilinear pieces. "The living room is my favorite room," confides the client. Velvet wallcoverings lend the space a sense of opulence. The predominant color is a teal that, she says, "gives the house oomph."

Pheasant proceeded to work so that, as he says, "different parts of the house were designed for different people. The

living room is formal for the wife, while the family room and kitchen are casual for the husband and children. The master bedroom, with its French windows looking out onto the trees and the lawn, serves as a retreat for the husband and wife." He asked the children to make drawings of how they wanted their rooms to look. They also participated in designing a big mosaic for the kitchen floor. "It reminds me of a Persian carpet," says Pheasant.

The art in the house represents a blend





LEFT: In winter the fireplace, over which hangs a mixed-media work by Peter Hoffer, warms the dining room. Edelman suede on chairs. ABOVE: The kitchen. Wolf range, at Abt.com. Barstools, Thomas Pheasant for McGuire. Waterworks faucets, sink and floor mosaic.

"She is formal; he is casual," Pheasant says of his client and her husband. "Working with couples can be tricky," he adds. BELOW: The light-flooded family room. Chairs and ottomans, Thomas Pheasant for McGuire. Glant drapery fabric. Stark carpet.







A 19th-century Spanish sunburst mirror takes center stage in the master bedroom. Two blanc de chine export vases were mounted as lamps. Jonas sofa and benches. Cowtan & Tout drapery fabric. Larsen silk wallcovering.

of the formal quality and the modern clean lines that Pheasant envisioned for the interiors. "I tried to evaluate the inventory," he explains. "I knew the best use of the old pieces." The results of careful editing include an abstract painting in the hall by John Gibson that Pheasant originally wanted for himself. A landscape over the

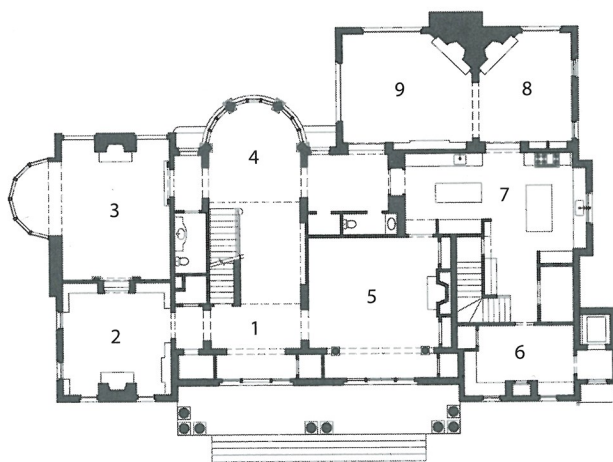
fireplace in the dining room by Canadian artist Peter Hoffer, which the client loves for its traditional quality, is "lacquered with a thick gloss, which makes it look modern," Pheasant says. A marble bust by Salvatore Albano, dating to circa 1878, commemorates a woman called Marguerite. The serene sculpture is the subject of





such little controversy as exists between congenial partners like the designer and his client. Pheasant wasn't certain it would take the new décor in a contemporary direction. But, he concedes, "Marguerite is both sculptural and creates personal life in the house, which is essential. The client's personality is present." □

**BELOW:** Pheasant floated the tub in the middle of the wife's bath. Waterworks wall and floor tile, faucets and tub. Stark vanity stool and drapery fabric. **BOTTOM:** The first-floor plan reflects a four-foot extension of the front wall.



- 1 ENTRANCE HALL
- 2 LIBRARY
- 3 LIVING ROOM
- 4 HALL
- 5 DINING ROOM
- 6 OFFICE
- 7 KITCHEN
- 8 BREAKFAST ROOM
- 9 FAMILY ROOM

COURTESY THOMAS PHEASANT, LLC



Thomas Pheasant completely redesigned a Colonial Revival house for longtime clients in Virginia. He says, "I knew this house presented an opportunity to do something different." Glant wallcovering and drapery fabric decorate the living room. Larsen ivory silk on Jonas sofas and armchairs.

