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SOUTHEAST

Character Study

Modern flourishes and timeless materials merge within a French provincial-influenced home near Birmingham.

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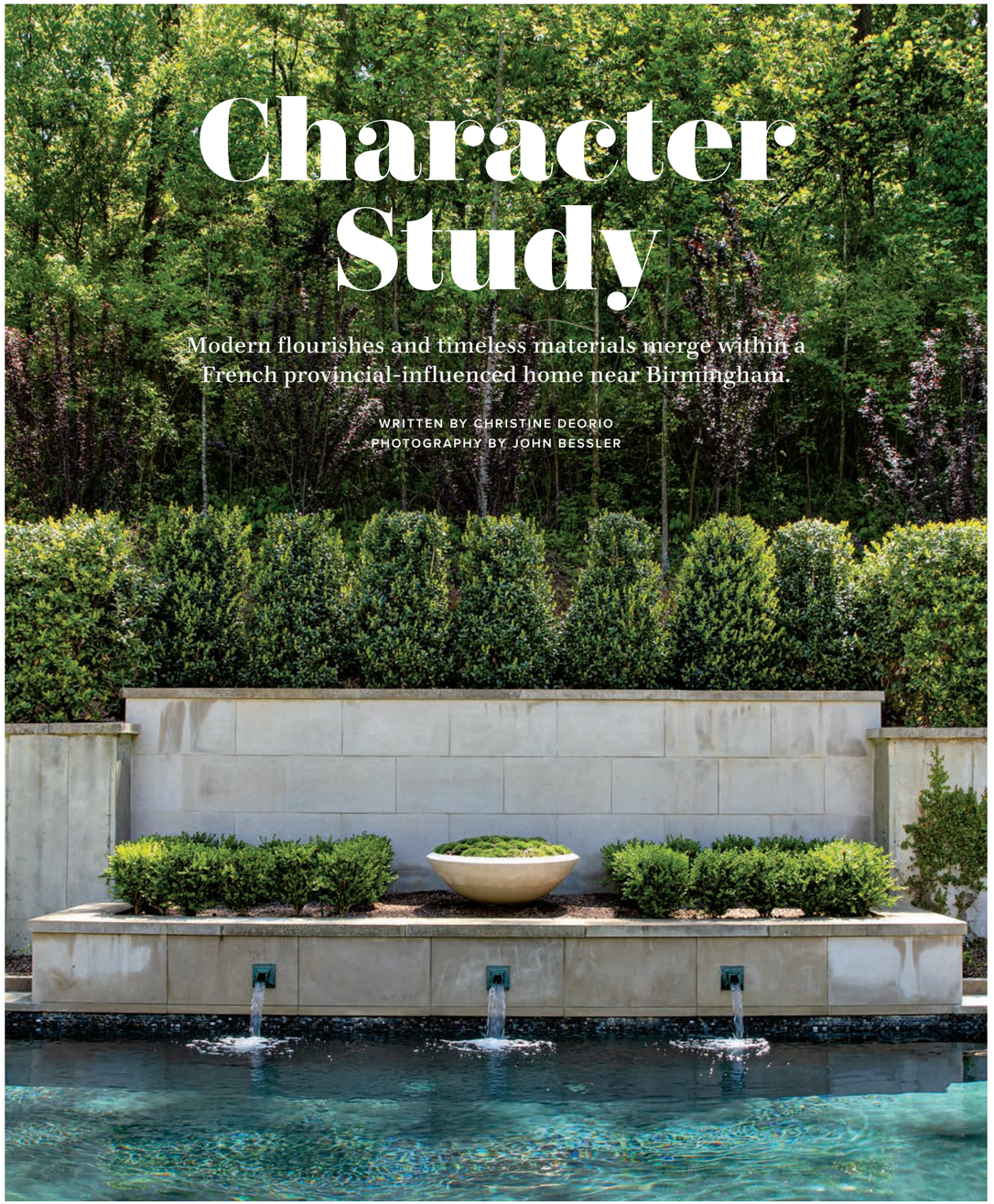

Architecture: Chris Tippett and Paul Langford, Tippett Sease Baker Architecture **Home Builder:** John Bryant, Francis Bryant Construction
Interior Design: Dana Wolter, Dana Wolter Interiors, Inc. **Landscape Architecture:** Troy Rhone, Troy Rhone Garden Design

The dining room of this freshly renovated Mountain Brook, Alabama, home showcases a tongue-and-groove ceiling by architect Chris Tippett and residential designer Paul Langford. Designer Dana Wolter followed suit with draperies of tawny Holland & Sherry wool, an antique trestle table from Robuck and Hickory Chair seats skirted in Cowtan & Tout velvet.

There's something about a French country-style house that is almost universally beloved. Perhaps it's the pleasing symmetries that strike a chord, or the gentle curve at the end of a steep slate roof. Or maybe it's simply the combination of grandeur and grace. The latter was what won over the current owners of a Mountain Brook, Alabama, abode that the pair first beheld in 2019—and as time ticked by, left them longing for more.

Built in the late 1990s, "The house already had great curb appeal, nice lines, and the rooms were good sizes," recalls general contractor John Bryant, whom the couple called upon to evaluate the property's potential. His initial assessments also offered scope for architect Chris Tippett, whom Bryant nominated to spearhead the renovation. Beyond improving flow among the home's main living spaces, the undertaking would add more of the timeless, authentic details the homeowners loved: from arched copper-clad dormers and reclaimed wood beams to limestone window headers and sills.

"Our vision was really just an update; giving the spaces more definition and better materials," Tippett says of the collaboration, which expanded to include residential designer Paul Langford, plus interior designer Dana Wolter and landscape designer Troy Rhone. The residence's new palette would incorporate contemporary finishes—an acknowledgment of its 21st-century reimagining—but by juxtaposing these with earthy materials, "there was some softening of the slickness often associated with modern," Tippett notes. Limewash mellowed the look of newly installed brick walls, for example, while the mullion pattern of new metal windows and doors offered "a gentle, big scale that's very French," the architect adds.

In the lush backyard, Rhone replaced a tired fountain with a modern cast-stone bowl, establishing a graceful focal point above the pool. Surrounding the water feature are moody, contemporary plantings in hues of copper, dark purple and green; in the summer months, tidy boxwood parterres bloom with wildflowers, from orange zinnias to purple Russian sage. The home's approach is marked by a gracious pea gravel motor court where traditional Southern plants star: magnolia for informal screening, boxwood and holly to fashion a formal entrance. "We worked to keep our lines simple without leaning overly modern or fussy," Rhone explains.

Tippett struck a similar balance when conceiving the home's interior millwork. The living room and study's waxed white oak wall paneling comprises random-width boards, which lend a more subtle texture. For the kitchen's sleek cabinetry, "we chose character-grade white oak," Tippett says, "so there's texture to contrast the clean lines." At the wife's request, a solid wall separating the kitchen from the living room was replaced by an operable, white oak-framed window, which physically unites the two spaces while visually linking their warm wood details.

The couple's fondness for a rich palette of hunter green, burnt orange and chocolate brown inspired the millwork's honeyed tone, plus the fabrics Wolter layered through each room. "I don't use a lot of prints," she says. "Instead, I look for textures that play off one another; you'll find linens and wools mixed with leather, mohair and sea grass. Some of the rooms might appear simple at first glance, but if you look at the details, you'll discover the depth."

In the entry, embellishments occupy the uppermost plane: A glass lantern suspends from a stitched suede ceiling, reflecting the light filtering through its custom leaded-glass door. In the dining room and study, rust-toned wool draperies draw the eye upward to chamfered wood beams that span tongue-and-groove ceilings. And at the new kitchen banquette, hunter green pillows echo the hue of the chandelier's bespoke shades.

Throughout the house, Wolter specified unlacquered brass hardware for its living finish and natural pairing with classic white marble, which envelops nearly every bathroom and extends from the kitchen countertops onto the vent hood. By leveraging subtle stylistic juxtapositions—sleek armchairs and an ornate antique library table in the living room; a modern trestle table beneath a rustic reclaimed beam in the kitchen's dining nook—Wolter enhanced the home's sense of authenticity. And though the furnishings are by and large new additions, "the look is collected," she explains. "It's hard to guess how old this home is now, and I'm very proud of that. Chris calls it an inheritable home—one that its owners will want to pass down—and will only look better over time."

Right: General contractor John Bryant and home builder Kevin Gann extended new millwork to a window dividing the living room and kitchen. Beneath the opening is an antique library table-cum-bar beside a Gregorius Pineo spindle chair in Opuzen sheepskin.

Opposite: The living room includes A. Rudin armchairs and a Hickory Chair sofa covered in Holland & Sherry mohair atop a Merida rug. The Niermann Weeks chandelier and Schumacher linen draperies provide soft light day and night.

Left: Tippett designed the kitchen's waxed white oak cabinet faces to have the appearance of horizontal planks. At the prep sink, solid-brass Bakes hardware by Armac Martin and a brass Waterworks faucet complement the wood's honeyed tone.

Opposite: The breakfast nook's custom banquette, upholstered in Holly Hunt's Cuba leather, joins a trestle-style Palmero dining table by Robert James Collection. The Chiltern Double pendant is by The Urban Electric Co.

Above: Waxed white oak millwork wraps the study, the material reappearing in a custom coffee table designed by Wolter. Texture-rich furnishings and suiting-inspired textiles include a custom sofa in a Cowtan & Tout velvet, plus Holland & Sherry wools on the pillows and Hickory Chair armchair.

Opposite: Teamed with a traditional Gregorius Pineo oak desk in the study, A. Rudin's chair No. 873 faces views framed by steel FireRock Building Materials doors and softened by custom panels of Holland & Sherry wool. The natural-yarn rug is by Merida.

Right: Mossy green lacquer lends a jewel-box effect in the powder room. Responding to the narrow window, Wolter placed an antique mirror from Maison over the vanity, its ornate gilt frame juxtaposing Bradley's Lindsey Diamond pendant in iron and brass.

Opposite: Benjamin Moore's Ballet White, a textural Stark rug and a custom wall-to-wall headboard upholstered in Great Plains velvet set a soft tone in this guest bedroom. Century Furniture's Swing bench sits beneath a Visual Comfort Classic Ring chandelier.