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A LOUISIANA STYLE HOLIDAY FEAST OF SEVEN

FISHES

CLEAN SLATE

Danah and Paul Fisher restored the architectural integrity of their Garden District Greek revival mansion in New Orleans while also putting their own complementary stamp on the remodel

BY LEE CUTRONE
PHOTOS BY EUGENIA UHL

FINDING AN OLD HOUSE THAT HAD not been renovated was paramount to Danah and Paul Fisher when they moved to New Orleans from Chicago five years ago. The couple, who had previously renovated or restored five other homes (including the Benjamin Porter Horton residence, an architecturally significant Prairie style house designed by E.E. Roberts, a contemporary of Frank Lloyd Wright) are staunch advocates of historic preservation.

"We're very strong proponents of restoring things back to their original use," said Danah. "We're fortunate to be able to dedicate resources to do it the right way."

In addition to looking for a "clean slate" of a house, the couple, who both hail from the Northeast, focused on neighborhoods, and though it wasn't a deal breaker, they were interested in working on a classic Greek Revival. They ultimately found an historic Garden District gem that was carved into apartments and had been stripped of many of its original architectural features.

A prosperous steamboat agent originally built the house in the 1850s as an elegant residence. When the Fishers purchased it, the house required structural work, a redesign of its subdivided interior and new outdoor landscaping.

"We're avid gardeners so the outdoor space was as important to us as the indoor space," said Danah.

The couple decamped to Slidell for the renovation, which took three years from design through construction. Working with architects Richard Albert and Leslie Raymond of Albert Architecture and Troy Wilson and Karin Nelson of Nelson Wilson Interiors, they restored existing features such as plaster and fireplaces, and kept new ones — including an ornate arched opening between the double parlors, a coffered ceiling in the kitchen and pickled paneling in the media room — traditional so they would look original to the home. They also worked with landscape architects Kim Alvarez and Allan Basik.

"The clients wanted the house and landscaping to be restored to its original 19th-century glory and to appear as continually maintained rather than recently renovated," says Raymond.

Lachin Ornamental created the ceiling medallion in the dining room. The crystal chandelier is from French Antique Shop and the antique fountain was acquired from another historic Garden District house a few blocks away. (Right) Nelson Wilson Interiors worked with Cabinets by Design to create an airy, light-filled country French kitchen with timeless features including stone floors and a coffered ceiling. The kitchen leads to a garden patio where the Fishers frequently dine and entertain.

› (Top) Brass sconces light the stairs and a pair of antique lanterns illuminate the second-floor landing.(Bottom) The casual, colorful garden room, the Fishers' favorite place to spend time at home, was designed to resemble a Parisian apartment. (Right) The palette in the formal rooms was drawn from the couple's collection of antique ornithological and botanical art. The ornate carved opening between the rooms is new but was designed to look like an original architectural feature. The tufted blue banquette against the wall was custom made to fit the space and the pink velvet sofa is by Lee Furniture.

The color palettes of the front rooms are built around the collection of botanical and ornithological art that the Fishers already owned. Pastels are dominant in the formal front of the house, while the hues are vibrant in the more casual, contemporary rear of the house, where the couple created a garden room designed to resemble a Parisian apartment. The goal for the entire house was the same throughout, however.

"We didn't want it to feel large and cavernous," said Danah. "It's very cozy. We can stay in one room or move to another and it's very intimate."

To furnish each room the team began with chandeliers and rugs, then layered antique, reproduction and new pieces for a fine-pedigreed interior that marries the patina of time with the luxury of modern day comforts.

"It was important for us to use New Orleans-based designers, artisans and furniture sourcing," said Danah, who along with her husband has taken an active role in each of the couple's restorations. "We wanted to put a lot of time and TLC and our own personal mark on the house." ■