

FUNHOUSE

A YOUTHFUL TAKE ON TRADITIONAL STYLE
PLAYS TO A SPIRITED FAMILY OF SIX



WRITTEN BY SALLY FINDER WEEPIE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY NATHAN SCHRODER
PRODUCED BY JENNY O'CONNOR





House rules? Here, they're pretty easy to live with. A leap off the couch, a sprint down the stairs, even an occasional ball in the house won't get you grounded for a month. Kids are the lifeblood of Kacy and Carter Tolleson's Dallas home, where family fun is as integral as crown moldings, paneled walls, and herringbone floors.

"Having four kids drove how we laid out the house," says Kacy—mom to Clara, Elliot, Kate, and Cove. "We live in a neighborhood where kids ride their bikes everywhere; people just stop in. There are always at least an extra four kids around. We wouldn't have it any other way."

To beautifully contain the chaos, architect Christy Blumenfeld and designer Shelby Wagner created a new house with lifestyle-centric rooms that meld comfort with classic style—and pop in just the right amount of youthful energy.

"Coming from an old house with lots of charm, I didn't want this house to feel new," Kacy says. "I wanted it to feel like we've lived here a long time. The biggest compliment is when someone asks me when I remodeled. They can't tell it's a new house."

In the foyer, new checkerboard marble flooring is weathered to look like antique stone tiles. Warm Venetian plaster

marries with crisp white wainscoting. A patinaed brass hand-rail caps an iron banister.

"The layers, the molding, the paneling make it feel cozy," Kacy says. "I love the warmth of traditional design."

A stately coffered ceiling crafted of rich pecky cypress right-sizes the volume of the airy living room, where fresh furnishings and a large mixed-media artwork by James Verbicky comfortably play against the plaster backdrop that continues from the foyer. "Plaster walls are dressy, clean—much warmer than paint because the finish is put on by hand in layers and layers," Blumenfeld says. "You can feel that—how it's lovingly washed until you get to the final coat. The walls have personality."

In the dining room, personality—and proper formality—come from a hand-painted chinoiserie paper chosen to create a gorgeous view on a wall with no windows. Wagner topped the delicate blush wallcovering with a bold blue swath of contemporary art. "Kacy and Carter wanted a traditional look, but

Library Rivets on a Phillip Jeffries wallpaper covering the ceiling are the mini-me of the nailhead trim in the adjoining bar. **Entry** Framed mirror panels reflect the light and gridwork of the transom window.

Living room A vintage Karl Springer coffee table repeats the rectangular heft of the coffered ceiling. **Previous pages** Kacy and Carter Tolleson with children Clara, Cove, Kate, and Elliot—and yellow Lab Journey. Neutral tones dominate a second seating area in the living room.



Dining room Some furnishings, including the dining table and rug, were pieces the Tollesons loved from their previous house. Kacy advocated for attention to detail on each room's fifth wall. Here, that translated into a sky blue ceiling. Art is by Johnny Abrahams; the wallpaper is Fromental. **Bar** Designer Shelby Wagner inset the lacquered bar with navy leather panels trimmed in brass nailheads.







they also wanted to mix in some modern elements to bring youth into the house,” the designer says.

Such juxtapositions also celebrate the couple’s decidedly opposites-attract take on color. “Carter is a huge advocate of vibrant color while Kacy likes softer hues,” Wagner says. “We made the house a blend of both—primarily soft and light in the main living areas with some well-chosen pops, vibrant in Carter’s study and bar area.”

Wood also asserts its spot in the home’s palette. A supporting role in the entry and living room grows to star billing in the Tollesons’ casual gathering spots, the library and kitchen.

In the cooking zone, a white oak envelope juxtaposes elegantly veined white marble, a white plaster range hood, and sleek stainless-steel appliances.

White oak also cocoons the library—a favorite spot for lounging and watching TV with the French doors open to greet a gentle breeze. The fireplace repeats the black marble and brass touches seen in the entry; leather-and-chrome scissor chairs add a modern note.

Softness and light return in Kacy and Carter’s master bedroom—their getaway, Wagner says. Walls are upholstered in a pale linen for a quiet mood. Venetian plaster on the cove ceiling reflects light, crowning the room with an elegant shimmer.

Expansive, heavily veined marble slabs make the shower the focal point of the master bath, also home to a hand-carved marble tub, a showpiece that brought the entire neighborhood to a halt on one sunny afternoon. “It weighs about 2 tons,” Wagner says with a laugh. “We had to bring it in through the window with a crane.”

While the drama of levitating tubs was a temporary distraction, the Tollesons’ inviting backyard has become a permanent draw for friends and family. “Kacy, Carter, and the kids live in their outdoor areas during warm weather,” Wagner says.

An L-shape layout on the rear of the home allows for a big strip of grass in the backyard that welcomes playtime plus a pool and spa. “Kids can be in the pool while remaining in sight of adults in the outdoor cooking and dining area,” Blumenfeld says. Meanwhile, the porch itself, spilling off one end of the house, doesn’t block light from the home’s interiors.

As with its interior design, the home’s architecture updates a classic aesthetic to suit a young couple and their tastes.

Outdoor kitchen As in the living room and bar, pecky cypress was used on the ceiling of the screen porch. Here, it wears a gray wash for patina. **Study** The kids love Carter’s crimson red study as much as Dad—it’s their favorite spot to do homework. **Kitchen** Counter stools play to the pretty and practical with striped linen backs and wipeable leather fronts.





Guest suite When Kacy's mom and sister visit, they can cuddle up to luxury in a room with an architecturally compelling bed nook. Drawers stow sleeping bags for nieces and nephews. **Master bedroom** Pretty draperies in a Kerry Joyce fabric add subtle pattern. **Clara's room** Carter and Kacy weren't the only Tollesons with opinions about the decor. Thirteen-year-old Clara wanted a grown-up room with high-gloss paneled walls in pale lavender. **Master bath** Wood brings warmth, even in the master bath, where it forms a herringbone floor. "The Tollesons love white marble," Wagner says, "but too much of it starts to feel antiseptic." **Master closet** Organization is the watchword in the walk-in closet, where a chaise offers a comfortable seat.







“Carter likes modern architecture, clean lines, and big views,” Blumenfeld says. “Kacy is drawn to traditional architecture.”

To please them both, Blumenfeld took her cues from an English architectural base. “Think about an old English cottage that’s mostly symmetrical, with a high-pitched roof,” she says. “We started with that vernacular and stripped away the details for a more modern look. But we kept the texture—we didn’t want the house to feel cold.”

Ivory plaster works with a shake shingle roof and living copper finishes to exude warmth. Dormers lift the eye while they also scale down the home’s overall feel. “The house is nestled into its environment,” Blumenfeld says. “It looks like a home passed down for generations—and this generation cleaned it up and modernized it.”

“What I love most is it’s a reflection of our family—of our personalities,” Kacy says. “This house feels like our house.”

Interior designer: Shelby Wagner **Architect:** Christy Blumenfeld

For more information, see sources on page 94

Cove’s room Fun is the theme of the youngest Tolleeson’s room, which features an animal-print carpet and wood animal mounts. **Playroom** Wagner decorated the cork wallcovering with the kids’ artwork. A wood top can transform the pool table into a homework or crafts station. **Bath** Drawers in window seats supply extra storage.





Exterior French doors on both sides of the house encourage indoor-outdoor living, as does a covered patio and a swing nook. A curved stairway made of old Chicago brick winds up to guest quarters as it cloaks an outdoor shower. [66](#)

