



Old World Redux

THIS OLD TOWN ALEXANDRIA
PIED-A-TERRE SERVES AS A BREAK FROM
SUMMER CROWDS.

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Previous pages: The light-filled living room presents multiple seating options for larger gatherings. Traditional and abstract art pieces are effortlessly combined. The stylish foyer chest offers extra storage, ideal for a smaller home. These pages: The café table is a cozy spot for the homeowners to enjoy breakfast or a light meal. The dining room features a darker color palette and a custom bar painted to match the textured wallpaper.



“While high season is fabulous on the Chesapeake Bay, Old Town Alexandria can be an equally wonderful place to escape in the summer,” says homeowner Jennifer Aument, who owns a condominium in the heart of Old Town Alexandria with her husband, Andy. The couple also has a residence on the Eastern Shore. Like other homes in this historic neighborhood, this one comes with a storied history. Prior to being converted into 12 condominiums, the 1802 building had served as private residences, a Catholic boarding school, and group housing for the Alexandria Hospital’s School of Nursing in the 1940s. Known as the Swann-Daingerfield, the building is in the National Register of Historic Places and was returned to residential use in the 1970s.

“We embraced working in a 19th-century historical home,” says Arlington-based interior designer Liz Mearns of Imagine Design. “It has classical architecture, 12-foot-high ceilings, crown moldings and tall windows. Our intent was to appreciate the home’s history while keeping things current—to have sophisticated décor without becoming too formal.”

One important early decision was to reimagine the interior design as less Colonial-revival and more Old World





Opposite, above left: An interesting niche defines the narrow hall to the den/office and master bedroom. Below left: The rug and wood ceiling warm up the small, yet functional, kitchen. This page: The den/office has a sleeper sofa for when the couple has overnight company.



“THE CONTINUOUS INSPIRATION FOR THIS PROJECT WAS A HIGH-END LONDON HOTEL. THINK LUXE EUROPEAN, RATHER THAN COLONIAL.”

—LIZ MEARNS

Left: A small patio outside the front door is amply outfitted for entertaining. Below: One full side of the den/office has built-ins to house extra clothing. Opposite: The master bedroom is finished in warm caramel tones. The crystal chandelier and satin bedding are pure luxury.



redux. “I told Liz I wanted to feel like I was walking into a historic hotel in Mayfair with beautiful chandeliers and luxe fabrics, where guests can drink fancy cocktails,” says Aument. “In reality though, we are casual people who often curl up on the couch with our dog, Murray, eat carryout, and watch Netflix.”

Mearns, who worked on two prior homes for the Auments, understood the mission. She jumped on board with practical solutions right away and looked to improve the floor plan and create additional built-ins. “We reworked the layout to make it functional for this professional couple who loves to entertain,” she says. “We returned the TV room at the front of the house back to its glory as a dining room and converted the second bedroom into a multifunctional space that serves as a den/office/dressing room.”

Working in collaboration with Stuart Kitchens, custom built-ins were added to both the former second bedroom, as well as to the dining room in the form of a stylish bar. “We painted the bar in a deep blue glossy paint to match the dining room’s rich navy grass cloth wallcovering,” says Mearns. “We also hung a stunning gold

gingko leaf chandelier to anchor the round dining table.”

Though the dining room clearly advocates the use of vivid color—blues and magentas—the overall palette veers neutral with understated creams, beiges, and golds. For example, the adjacent living room is washed in white tones. The Auments’ previous home was midcentury modern, so Mearns worked with the couple to find suitable traditional furniture that would be fresh, yet appropriate for the historic residence.

In the living room, artworks include a traditional gilt-framed landscape above the fireplace, as well as a large abstract canvas by Tiffany McAvoy. “To best showcase the art, and for airiness and flow, we also kept the walls mostly white while trying to give each space its own special flair and identity,” says Mearns. At the end of the corridor leading to the bedrooms, a beautiful dresser

sits in a moody wallpapered niche, while a white porcelain-based table lamp packs a high-contrast punch. Meanwhile, an abstract piece of overscale striated art in the corridor complements the original 1802 floorboards.

The Auments’ bedroom is warm and welcoming in deep caramel tones with quilted satin bedding and a dripping crystal chandelier mounted above the upholstered bed. “With the tall ceilings, our chandeliers needed to be oversized to suit the scale, while furnishings were kept traditional with clean lines,” says Mearns.

The home also has a charming, bricked patio at the entry door, boxed in by hedges and furnished with transitional outdoor furniture. “We love having summertime cocktails out there with friends in the early evening and then strolling down the historic streets to our favorite outdoor restaurants,” says Aument.