

John Phifer MARRS INTERIORS FOR COLLECTORS

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My grandmother's old secretary was painted in a faux bois bird's-eye maple and holds a collection of Chinese export porcelain and, of course, mudmen. I love having it in the bedroom because it's the first thing I see when I open my eyes in the morning.





Victorian Silver

Victorian silver, or for that matter, most antique silver is really lovely. The craftsmanship alone is remarkable, even if you don't like the style, surely you can appreciate that. I'm amazed at the people who cannot appreciate it but only worry about having to polish it. (Let's not even go there.) What's even better with this collection is that you can actually use a lot of it—to set a beautiful table or sideboard, for example. This client really does love silver and is so passionate about her collection. We have just about filled every nook and cabinet she has—and she is still on the hunt! Her dining room is always full of wonderful pieces, and I know it makes her happy! To keep everything from getting too serious with all the mahogany furniture, we had an artist paint the dining room walls a rather whimsical floral design in her favorite colors.



FACING: A mahogany curved-front corner cabinet holds a collection of Victorian silver child's cups and antique Limoges plates, topped off with silver chalices and a horse show trophy. Note the unique design of the glass door.

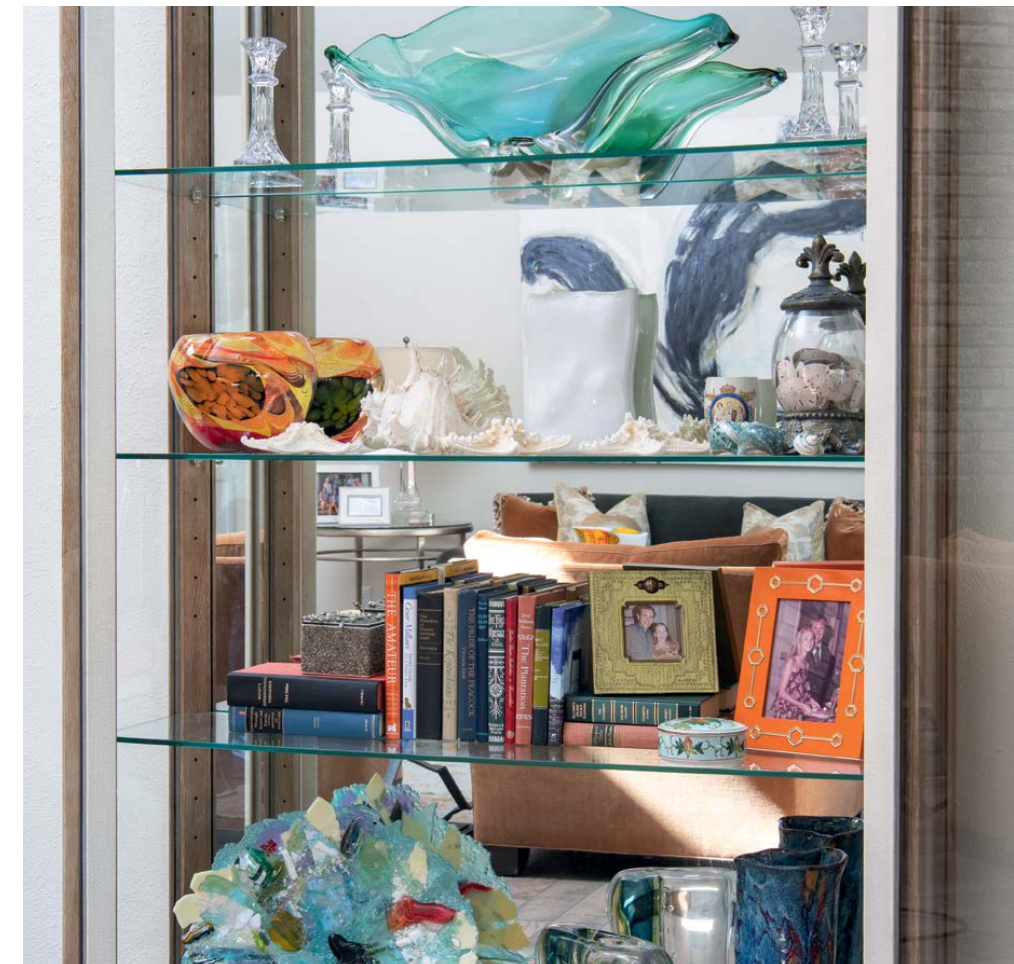
ABOVE LEFT: Who doesn't like champagne—especially served on this gorgeous rosewood games table? Even the peacock seems happy.

ABOVE RIGHT: The handsome chest between two dining room windows holds an early 19th-century samovar.



Art Glass

Art glass can also be decorative as well as useful. Hang it on the wall or put it on a pedestal or fill it with flowers—what's not to love about collecting this unique art form. This client has had a grand time traveling all over the world and bringing home piece after piece of beautiful art glass. (I'm amazed that they have all arrived unscathed.) We had to make sure that this house was bright and light-filled to show off all her favorite pieces.



FACING: Notice how the painting plays off the design on the art glass sitting on this games table. Even the chair fabric becomes a big part of the color composition. We freshened up the old brown game chairs with a coat of white paint.

ABOVE: A glass-front and mirror-back display cabinet shows off some larger pieces of art glass along with family photos and books. The mirror back lets you enjoy all sides of the glass pieces.



ABOVE: Detail of one of the large, wall-mounted ammonites—obviously a star of the collection. We used a soft linen fabric to upholster the wall behind it.

FACING: Each geode and mineral has its own unique, custom-made stand and each one is individually lighted. The large table in front of the sofa was custom built and fitted with a top of perfectly clear white onyx.





ABOVE: The library offers a view to the side garden. An antique writing desk is placed behind the sofa; the two chairs are covered in F. Schumacher.

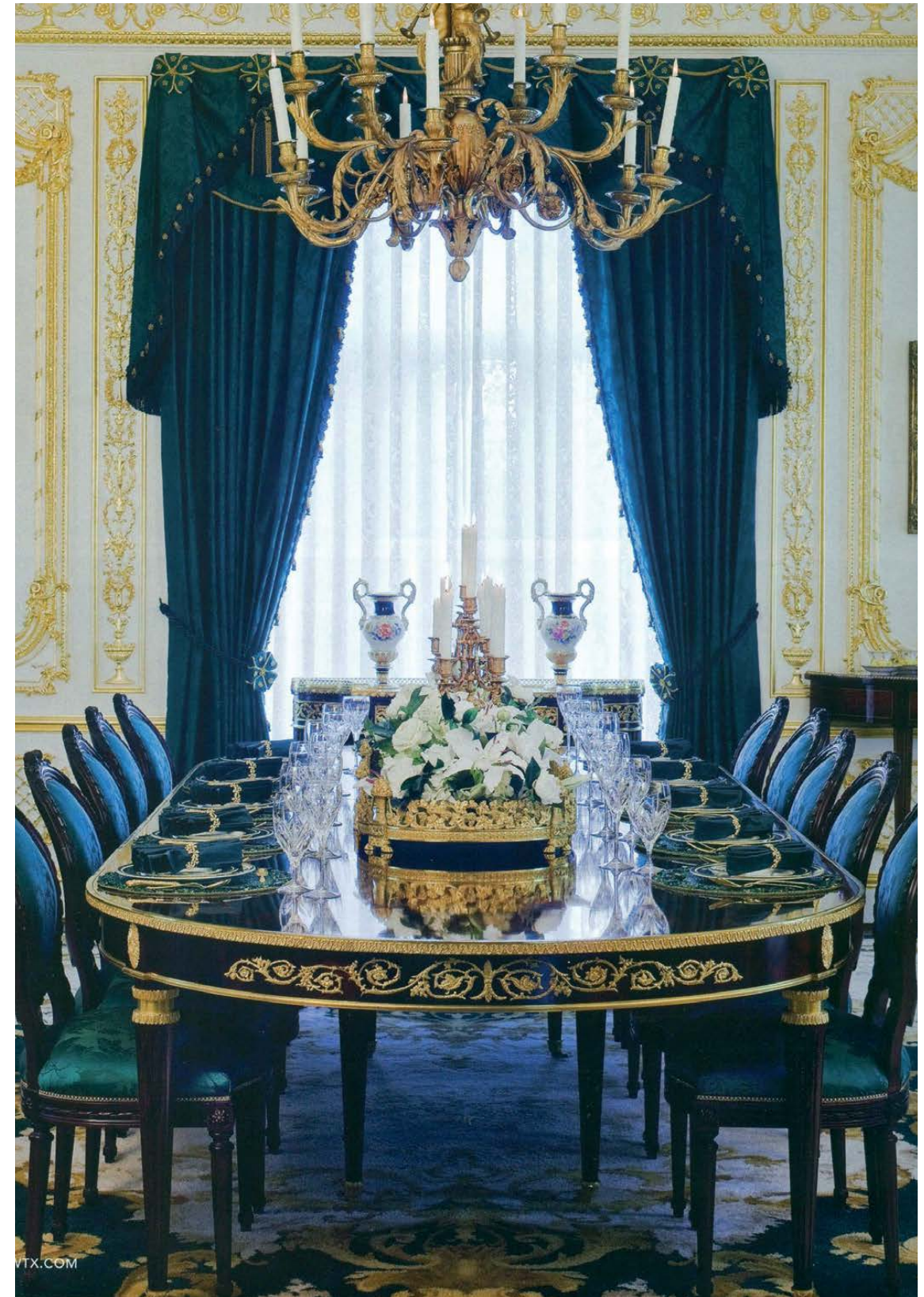
FACING: A lovely and very delicate antique textile covers a small stool. The lady of the house has a passion for beautiful antique embroidered fabrics.





ABOVE: The “Hall of Mirrors,” though somewhat smaller than the original, is highly decorative, with a painted ceiling and elaborate marble flooring. The neoclassic-style, ormolu-mounted, ebonized pedestals are 19th century, and the secretaire at the end of the hallway is Louis XVI. The wall of exterior windows reflects light onto the mirrors placed directly opposite, just like the original.

FACING: The dining room features a custom table with a magnificent Empire ormolu centerpiece. All fabric is Brunswig & Fils silk damask. The signed bronze chandelier is antique.





A Family Wing in the Georgian Style

When their original Georgian-style house got a little crowded, these clients decided to add on a wing for family living and entertaining and displaying collections. And add on we did—in a big way. The new large double-height rooms are spacious and can easily accommodate family activities and entertaining on a large scale. Two custom games tables can be put together quite easily to create a large banquet table. The vast family entertaining room is finished all in walnut; however, since the natural walnut was a little too dark, we bleached it all to create a mellow medium brown. Custom-designed bronze chandeliers light the room. The color choices came from the large area rug and the furniture plan is comfortable and inviting.

Upon arrival in the family wing entry, you are surrounded with multiple unique collections of artwork and decorative objects, and yet lots of family activity is always going on somewhere close by. It is a very livable house that is also filled with collection after collection—some light-hearted and fun and others quite serious.



FACING: A monumental, double-height family living room is paneled in walnut that has been lightened to a warm medium-brown. I designed the three bronze chandeliers, created by Lost Arts, for the room. They illuminate both the space below and the lovely plaster ceiling above.

ABOVE: The wing that houses the family living was seamlessly added onto the original Georgian-style residence. The architects were Richard Giegengack of Washington, D.C., and D. C. Broadstone of Dallas, Texas.



ABOVE LEFT: A life mask of President Abraham Lincoln sits on a deep window ledge in a connecting hallway outside the private office.



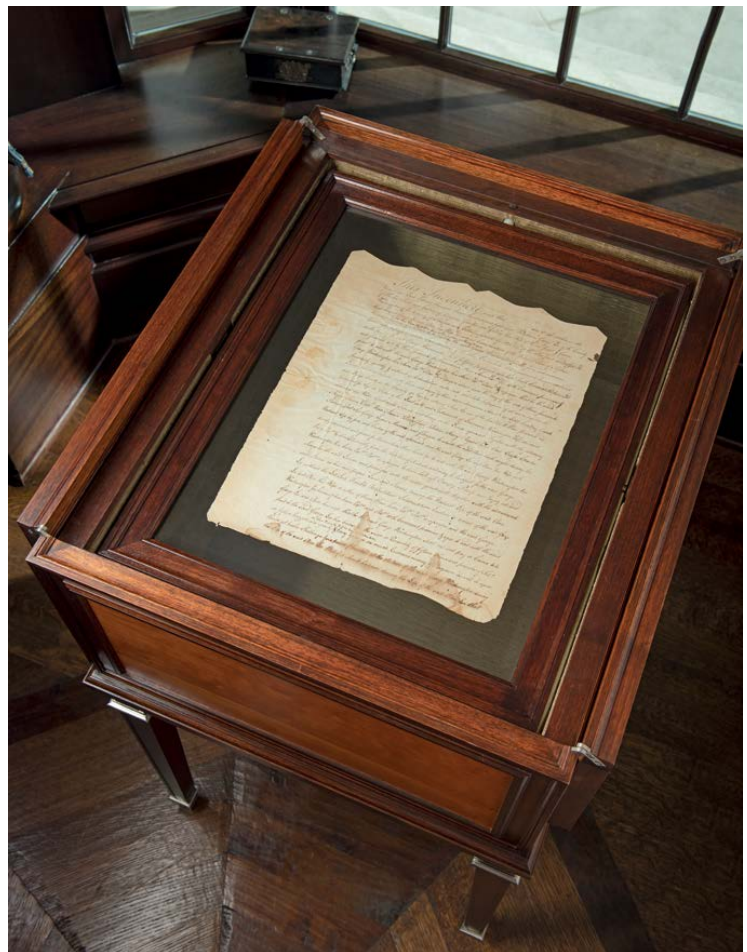
ABOVE RIGHT: Framed miniature portraits are arranged between two windows in one corner of the octagonal private office. I had two of my favorite local artists, Brian Jones and Brian Scott, paint the trompe l'oeil ribbons on the wall.

FACING: The library has a raised stage for performances, complete with a Steinway concert grand, at the opposite end from the fireplace in the stately room.

OVERLEAF: This view reveals the enormous length of the main room of the library with its massive fluted mahogany columns and beautiful ornate plaster ceiling. The yellow damask parcel-gilt walnut armchair, in the foreground next to the sofa, is early 18th century.



“Collecting is preserving for the future.”



ABOVE: A special wooden cabinet was designed to display the front and back of a very rare document relating to Mt. Vernon, the home of George Washington.

FACING: The enormous carved-mahogany fireplace, with its onyx-faced clock, dominates one end of the library's main room. A richly colored oriental carpet anchors a comfortable seating area. Multiple collections are displayed on antique tables and consoles.





The soft yellow walls of the massive entrance hall are a warm backdrop to the collection of Dutch artwork and 18th-century French walnut commodes. The entrance has beautiful openings leading to the sitting room and dining room or straight ahead to a central hallway.



The dining room, with a large Edwardian dining table and a Sheraton sideboard (ca. 1760) has walls upholstered in an elegant damask by Jasper Fabrics. Antique paintings and silver are displayed throughout the spacious room. A magnificent bronze and crystal chandelier hangs over the table and is reflected in the large, oval French mirror.

An overview of the sitting room, with blue silk walls by Stark as a soft background for a pair of lovely antique French mirrors and a pair of 7th-century Chinese terra-cotta figures. The stunning coromandel screen (with five panels here and five more on the other side of the room) is late 17th century.

