



good as GOLD

WRITTEN BY ALLISON LIND PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL HANSON

Designer Holly Van Biene took this Bellevue home's interior from all-white bland to warm and colorful—just right for a lively family

**O**n a clear Saturday afternoon, the sun shines through Grace Lao's living-room window, casting a glow on a gold-leafed coffee table and area rug by Barbara Barry. The space radiates sophisticated formality, reminiscent of a high-end designer showroom. Suddenly a child's toy is tossed into view and a giggle breaks the silence—Grace and husband David Jones' one-year-old daughter, Sophie, turns the talk from high style to high chairs.

It's a juxtaposition the couple has held dear since moving into their 4,800-square-foot traditional chateau-style Bellevue home in the spring of 2006. Shortly after completing their remodel in 2007, they traveled to Taiwan to adopt Sophie, then five months old.

Although the home provided ample square footage, its design didn't match the homeowners' tastes. Previous owners had done some exterior remodeling, but the lackluster interior didn't fit the needs or style the couple desired for the home where they saw themselves living for many years to come. They wanted something sophisticated but modern, with touches of glamour.

"Stark-white walls, dated whitewashed wood flooring: It was your typical classic Bellevue spec home," recalls designer Holly Van Biene, whom Grace and David hired to tackle the interior remodel. "I immediately had this vision of a big white wedding cake."

But it was a wedding cake with one noteworthy feature: When visitors enter the home, their eyes are drawn through the living room's exaggerated arched windows to a commanding view of Lake Sammamish, Mount Baker and the Cascade Mountains. "That's the immediate focal point when you walk in," Van Biene says. "The homeowners, rightfully, gave me one rule: Don't block their view."

The then-all-white palette didn't undermine the view, but it created a sterile environment that the owners



VAN BIENE CHOSE SOFT FURNISHINGS SUCH AS A BARBARA BARRY SOFA AND SLIPPER CHAIRS FOR THE LIVING ROOM (OPPOSITE AND ABOVE), AND ADDED WHIMSICAL TOUCHES. EVEN THE WOOL BARBARA BARRY AREA RUG (FROM DRISCOLL ROBBINS) HAS SILK RIBBONS RUNNING THROUGH IT IN A PLAYFUL, LYRICAL PATTERN. VAN BIENE'S DESIGN FOR THIS SPACE GARNERED HER A FIRST PLACE AWARD FOR "BEST LIVING ROOM" IN THE 2007 NORTHWEST DESIGN AWARDS.



## SEATTLE HOMES & LIFESTYLES

VAN BIENE KEPT THE DINING ROOM ELEGANT, WITH A MODERN CHANDELIER, MAHOGANY BARBARA BARRY TABLE AND A CUSTOM BUFFET.

**OPPOSITE:** IN THE MASTER BATH, RICH DETAILS INCLUDE JAVA-STAINED CABINETS, AN ELEGANT FREE-STANDING OVAL AIRBATH WITH POLISHED NICKEL FIXTURES (*TOP RIGHT*), LIMESTONE AND METALLIC GLASS TILES; A NANCY CORZINE CHAISE (*LOWER LEFT*), UPHOLSTERED IN LUXURIOUS FAWN-COLORED RUBELLI VELVET, IS A FAVORITE LOUNGING SPOT FOR GRACE; A PAINTING BY LOCAL ARTIST FLORA BOWLEY HANGS ABOVE THE BED (*LOWER RIGHT*).

disliked. Van Biene's challenge was to design a home that emanated the clients' favorite colors—orange, gold and blue—and warmth without detracting from the world beyond the windows.

With 16-foot-high ceilings and expansive windows, the interior needed a lot of warming up. If Van Biene had colored "within the lines" of this chateau-style home, "the formula answer would have been lots of florals, chintz and ruffles," she says. "That would have been the typical marriage to the architecture. Boring!"

With the homeowners' blessing, Van Biene broke the mold and brought to life a design that is at once subtly glamorous, contemporary and colorful, while remaining respectful of its traditional architecture.

In the open living room and dining room, walls went from white to a "quiet green that pulls from nature," Van Biene says. "It helps integrate the outdoors with the indoors." To accommodate her clients' preferred color palette, Van Biene primarily left the blues outside—the water and sky that dominate the view—and complemented that hue with warm tones such as the apricot velvet sofa and burnt-orange band at the bottom of the window sheers in the living room. "The color combination is meant to be subtle; nothing is really strong," Van Biene says.

For further interest, metallics add life and glamour to the space—a gold-leafed coffee table, a silver-leafed oval mirror and a custom-designed buffet made from a bronze-washed metal mesh, for example. Rich fabrics—velvet sofa upholstery, silk pillows—add interest to the simple forms of soft furnishings. Whimsical and elegant at the same time, subtle touches tie the interior with its traditional architectural

bones, Van Biene notes.

The original "builder blah" all-white theme continued into the master bedroom, an area Grace and David wished to be "romantic, elegant and cozy, with a sense of whimsy," Van Biene says. Window sheers in a shimmering Mokum fabric were the starting point for the room; bands of apricot and silvery blue-gray are touched with metallic highlights and colorful confettillike flecks. While window coverings and artwork are playful, mirrored nightstands, an upholstered headboard, crystal lamps and silky apricot bedding add the glamour the couple desired. The once-white-washed bedroom fireplace was refurbished with apricot marble framed by mirrored stainless steel.

"They wanted glamour and they wanted modern—an unfussy, sensual space," Van Biene says. "The color helps keep it unstuffy: a little fun, a little unexpected."

Despite high-end touches throughout the home, Grace says that—with a little baby proofing—the resulting redesign is perfect for her family. "The key to a happy home is balance," Grace says. "Balancing practicality with taste and visibility—that's the spice of life." ■

*Allison Lind's work is featured in Ty Pennington at Home and Remodeling & Makeovers.*

### Design Details INTERIOR DESIGNER

Holly Van Biene, ASID, Van Biene Interiors, 2000 124th Ave. N.E., Ste. B-102, Bellevue, (425) 646-9009 or hvbinteriors.com

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