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*Interior Designer Alexandre Fleuren redesigns
an I'On home for a family's next phase of life*

by ROBIN HOWARD / *photography by* PATRICK BRICKMAN / RIFT STUDIOS

Instead of a cocktail table, a kneeling game table allows the family to play games together. The sectional is the largest the designer has ever installed.

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Sliding doors on the custom Lago Italia cabinets feature bespoke metal handles that mimic the topography of the homeowner's favorite wine valleys.



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LEXANDRE FLEUREN'S CLIENTS WERE LIVING IN AMSTERDAM when they contacted her about refreshing their home before their return to the United States. The six-bedroom, five-bath, 5,100-square-foot home in l'On was built in 2011 when the couple had two young sons. A decade later, the family's lifestyle, needs and preferences had evolved significantly.

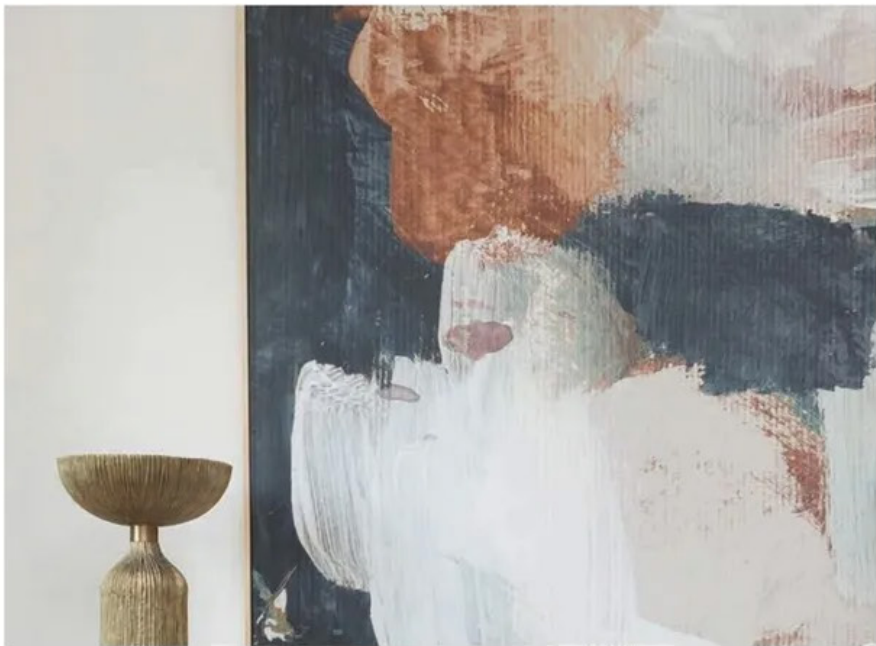
With the boys approaching their teenage years, the clients wanted to update their home's aesthetics and function to serve them better as a family. One of the clients is the founder of a women's triathlon series called She Tris, and the family loves to run and bike together, so they were hoping for improved storage. They also love to hang out together, so they asked for a more organic vibe with family-friendly spaces where they could all play and relax together.

"With the boys growing and having lived abroad for a year, the clients anticipated that when they came back from Amsterdam, they would be moving into a new stage of life," Fleuren says. "Not only are they health-conscious, they're environmentally conscious, so they wanted to repurpose everything they could. That's something we always respect in the design."

While some designers are known for specializing in one style, Fleuren has a reputation for an exceptional ability to create spaces that are entirely unique to the client. "Typically, my clients are busy people who work hard and want tailored spaces to relax when it's time to play," she says. "We're so personal; we never try to sell someone on a specific look or style. Everything in our portfolio is different. Our clients come to us because they trust us—not just to get it right but to get it right for them."

Clients also come to Fleuren because she doesn't maintain a long wait list, which is typical in fast-growing markets such as Charleston. "I understand that sometimes, when you want to change, build or buy a new home, you want a space that aligns with your new phase of life. Sometimes, you're ready to make things happen. We get the ball rolling right away," she says.

Fleuren left the trimwork and the original English walnut flooring in the home; otherwise, she began by gutting some of the rooms and smoothing awkward layouts. For example, in the



A 106-inch-long French art deco bar cabinet makes the entry hall the perfect place to welcome guests with a cocktail.

client's bedroom suite, one of the closets was asymmetrical, as was the bathroom. A simple structural redesign brought in symmetry, which improved function and flow.

As we enter, the home's unique foyer allows the experience to unfold. Instead of direct sight lines through the back of the house, we're greeted by a long horizontal wall with an elegant French art deco bar cabinet supporting a pair of textured ceramic lamps and a bar tray. "Their foyer is so large, it's part of the house's circulation," Fleuren says. "The bar cabinet is 106 inches long, so it's a great place to lay out drinks." The designer warmed up the space with a one-of-a-kind turquoise Mamluk Ziegler rug from Pakistan.

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Past the foyer is a powder room where the designer added wallpaper in a geometric zigzag pattern. The kitchen, living and dining areas are open to each other with views of Horlbeck Creek and the pool. In the kitchen, she added a new backsplash of square white tiles with a handmade texture and a decorative hood made of raw steel with polished nickel accents.

Fishbowl lighting was replaced with a fixture made of milk glass in an antique brass frame. "I know fishbowl lighting is popular, but bare bulbs aren't flattering, and it's not easy to see with a bulb in your face," Fleuren says. Off the kitchen, the designer refreshed the mudroom, lacquered the walls a deep gray-blue and added deep storage baskets. Another one-of-a-kind Mamluk Ziegler rug anchors this cozy but highly functional space.

In the dining room, Fleuren replaced an empty 18-foot niche with Italian Lago Italia custom cabinetry. The cabinet is laid out in three 6-foot sections. First is the coffee station, the middle is the glass and china storage, and the last is for

The powder room has dynamic wallpaper in a horizontal zigzag pattern.

right:
Designer Alexandre Fleuren has a reputation for creating unique spaces that suit her clients' lifestyles.



Large-format porcelain tiles in the shower add drama to the primary bathroom.



puzzles and games. The cabinets are covered by two sliding doors that don't bypass, so one section, usually the china display, is on view while the harder-working cabinets flanking it are covered.

Fleuren also designed the handles for the sliding doors, which contribute to the room's drama. "The clients collect wine and like to travel to wine valleys and bike. I took maps of their favorite river valleys, blew them up and put them in CAD. Then I had handles fabricated from the curving lines of the topography by an artisan in Tennessee," she says. "It's special to them because it means something, but it's also art and becomes a conversation piece at dinner."

A sparkling chandelier of reclaimed bottles hangs above a magnificently generous dining table that seats 10. "They wanted a user-friendly dining table where they could also play games and do puzzles. It's big enough that they can have a meal on one end without putting everything away on the other. I also used a cerused oak, which is the strongest finish you can get in terms of wear and tear," she says. Comfortable armchairs at the head and foot of the table are perfect for long dinners or puzzle sessions.

"This dining room is one of a kind," Fleuren says. "When you turn into the room from the foyer, the focal point is the dining room wall. I knew it had to be a work of art, but it was also completely wasted space. Making it useable was a game changer for how they use the space. The client feels like she got a whole second kitchen because of how much storage we added."

Fleuren repurposed existing shelving in the living room, adding lighting and raw steel bands to the front. She modified the fireplace wall by pulling it forward, tiled it with brick-textured tiles and added a Frame TV. The sectional is the largest she's ever installed. "Their goal was to have a sofa where everyone in the family could lie down and watch TV together," Fleuren says. Instead of a traditional cocktail table, she used a kneeling game table so they wouldn't have to lean down to play games. "This is one more room in the house where it's easy for the whole family to gather to eat, play or just hang out together."

The leather chair, which Fleuren calls the "aviator" chair, was repurposed from another room. "The client loved it, so I moved it into the living room and placed an inlay table next to it so the pattern reflects off the metal on the side of the chair," she says. On the opposite side, she chose a swivel chair upholstered in a textured white fabric. "I like the juxtaposition of the two chairs. Rooms look too much like they came from a catalog if everything matches, and the mix of masculine and feminine adds interest. Besides, people prefer to sit in different types of chairs; some like deep seats, and some like straighter up and down. It's nice to give people options."

The client's favorite room is also on this floor. The "pool room" is home to the bath that serves the pool and was initially designed to be a place for the boys to hang out. "This room had to be very user-friendly," Fleuren says. "I added a washable rug and an outdoor-rated coffee table so if someone puts a drink on it, it won't leave rings." She also painted all the casings and crown molding Benjamin Moore "Oxford White" and

A seating area in the primary bedroom is a favorite family hangout.



painted the doors "Pale Oak," a slightly warmer color than the trim, which gives them a bit of pop.

With its moody wallpaper and bright hits of yellow, the client loved the room so much that she relegated the boys to another room. "The clients don't like orange, but I had to use a color to warm up the space," Fleuren says. "The yellow is so nice in here. I love color in very neutral spaces. You have to have color to have a mood."

A long hall serves the bedroom, bathroom and closet, so Fleuren broke up the too-long visual line with woven grasscloth wallpaper, then relocated one of the closet doors and made it wider. The designer takes closets very seriously. In the largest closet, she made the layout symmetrical and then measured the client's dresses to determine the best way to use the space. "We get really specific in the closet," she says. "By taking the time to measure clothing, we increased her storage space."

Formerly, a floor-to-ceiling tufted headboard lorded over the bedroom. Fleuren lightened the room by replacing it with a more appropriately sized upholstered bed frame with a copper finish. She repurposed chairs from the downstairs living area and added durable hassocks so the couple could put their feet up without worry. "I added seating in the bedroom so they can all sit and talk," she says. "It makes it easy for the boys to come in and hang out."

Sticking with the repurposing theme, the starburst mirrors on the side of the bed are made from repurposed antique Indian thread spools, and the large credenza with a travertine top is vintage. The large Afghan rug has a silver background with terra-cotta-colored medallions and border, a color combination that's very rare. "I wanted something with an all-over pattern, and this rug certainly makes an impression," she says. The bed covering, a Turkish Suzani, is also one of a kind.

In the bathroom, the designer added large-format porcelain tiles in the shower and small brick-marble tiles on the floor. Above the vanities are walnut and bone mirrors, and alabaster lighting emits a soft glow. As pretty as it is, this room is also highly functional. There is a terry cloth stool next to the tub and lots of hooks for robes and towels.

In the water closet, Fleuren used the same grasscloth pattern as the entry hall, except this time in a vinyl look-alike. "I try to avoid grasscloth in wet areas, and vinyl can look every bit as good as the real thing," she says.

When the family returned from 18 months of living abroad, they were excited to begin living in their redesigned space, with a new phase of life ahead of them. "They're such great people, and they're very happy with how it turned out," Fleuren says. *

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