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An elegant yet welcoming foyer (above) accents dark-wood pieces with pops of bright teal. In the dining room (opposite), Graham paired a marble-topped dining table with Lucite and upholstered dining chairs; the chocolate-brown living room is visible beyond.

urban chic

Lori Graham mixes glamour with kid-friendly design in a Cathedral Heights home

BY JENNIFER SERGENT
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIK JOHNSON



With its outdoor materials in bright hues and vivid patterns, the sunroom (this page) is a welcoming and nearly indestructible space. Graham layered a Grandin Road outdoor rug over a darker one from Frontgate and paired a sofa from CB2 with a coffee table by Hive Modern. The kitchen (opposite, bottom, and top, left) is white, while color and pattern flourish in the adjoining mudroom (top, right).



The renovation was like peeling an onion—when one problem was fixed, another problem would reveal itself. And on it went for more than a year after Jackie Perrins and her family purchased a house in Northwest Washington that hadn't been updated since Kennedy was president.

Yet the chaos of construction presented an opportunity. While walls and ceilings were ripped up and ductwork and electrical wires exposed, the owners decided to bring in an interior designer who could plan and decorate new spaces specifically suited to two city-loving parents and their four young children.

Perrins says she couldn't believe her luck when she realized that designer Lori Graham, whose work she had clipped from magazines and admired online, was based in DC. The two immediately hit it off, and she praises Graham for fulfilling her seemingly contradictory design goals: "I love living in the city, so I wanted to have an urban vibe. I also wanted it to be kid-friendly, and I wanted it to have a lot of color."

They were going for the edgy chic of a boutique hotel that would somehow survive heavy kid traffic and multiple juice spills along the way. And they had a strict budget, with no room for overruns.

Graham dove right in, working with architect Chris Snowber of Hamilton Snowber Architects to redefine spaces and create interi-

RENOVATION ARCHITECTURE: CHRISTOPHER R. SNOWBER, AIA, Hamilton Snowber Architects, Washington, DC. INTERIOR DESIGN: LORI GRAHAM, Lori Graham Design, Washington, DC. CONTRACTOR: Horizon Builders, Crofton, Maryland.

“It feels like a very chic,
European hotel—and it’s
my bedroom!”

—JACKIE PERRINS



For contrast in the master suite (these pages), Graham combined a gold bamboo silk rug from Timothy Paul with walls and custom bedstead painted in Benjamin Moore’s Steel Wool. In the master bath, light-hued walls and shiny hardware balance a rug-like mosaic tile design by Ann Sacks and a black-stained custom vanity.

ors that would flow together through color, shape and form—with nothing off-limits to the kids.

She set the tone in the foyer, which is marked by the strong presence of black mirrors, a console table and stools. “It’s clean and modern with curvy lines,” Graham says. The vignette also speaks to Perrins’s desire for a bit of Asian influence throughout the house, as her two youngest children are adopted from Korea.

Many of the furnishings were ordered from catalogs, and instead of purchasing new art, Graham kept to the budget by reframing existing works the family had. “I couldn’t believe she was displaying it,” Perrins says of the artwork on the console table in the foyer. “It was stored in a box somewhere!”

The same went for the reframed children’s portraits in the dining room—a key space that “had to carry the weight of a formal dining



room, but be forgiving of small children who spill stuff,” Graham says. She had a slab of spill-proof Calacatta Gold marble cut to fit on top of an elegant base, and chose inexpensive Lucite ballroom chairs from 1stdibs.com to create a dining space that beautifully accommodates both guests and children. She purchased affordable outdoor seat cushions, then indulged the parents with dramatic host chairs at either end. Instead of spending a lot of money on custom built-in cabinetry for the dining room, Graham ordered the same cabinets she used in the kitchen in a different finish, dressing them up with fancy hardware.

In keeping with the indestructible-luxe theme, the kitchen, too, is “very kid-friendly even though it’s modern and chic,” Perrins says. The bright white Corian counters can be cleansed of multiple pen and marker stains without a trace left behind.



Perrins's favorite space is the sunroom, where the family regularly gathers to hang out and watch TV. It was originally unventilated. "DC has only so many days where you don't need heating or air conditioning—it was like a garden shed," Perrins says of the once-uncomfortable space. "Now it's my happy, cozy room."

Graham started with a vintage chair that the owners already had, reupholstering it in a bright, Kelly green pattern. She used multitudes of indoor/outdoor fabrics—even layering two outdoor rugs—to create a vibrant mix that wouldn't wear out. Indeed, the white sofa, slip-covered in a durable outdoor canvas, has suffered "endless spills," not to mention smeared brownie crumbs. Says Perrins, "You literally take a towel and some water and wipe it right off."

Upstairs, Graham helped Perrins and her husband redefine the master bedroom, which was disproportionately large when they

started. Snowber and his team designed a wall that would bisect the room, allowing the addition of a much bigger master bath. Graham concealed off-season clothes and bed and bath linens behind built-in shelving and decorative molding; a TV slides conveniently out over a window-seat niche.

"It feels like a very chic European hotel—and it's my bedroom!" Perrins says. "I love it." Despite the drawn-out renovation that forced the family to move out for several months, the homeowner reflects, "Lori made something that could have been painful really fun and pleasant." ♦

Jennifer Sergent is a writer in Arlington, Virginia. Photographer Erik Johnson is based in Alexandria, Virginia.

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