

In the breakfast room of Matthew Carter's home in Lexington, Kentucky, floor-to-ceiling windows—designed by his partner, architect Brent Bruner, during a remodel—maximize the garden views. Walls and ceiling, Pratt & Lambert Feather Gray. **OPPOSITE:** Carter, who was named one of HB's "America's Top Young Designers" in 2004, strolls with his fox terrier, Henry, in the backyard, which was designed by David Cousins.



*Outdoor Living*



AT MATTHEW CARTER'S GREEK REVIVAL HOME IN KENTUCKY, THE FORMALITY IS TEMPERED WITH INVITING FURNISHINGS AND QUIRKY ART. STEP INTO THE LUSH GARDEN, RELAX, AND ENJOY THE HOUSE DRINK: LOCAL BOURBON, SERVED NEAT.

*Interior Design* MATTHEW CARTER *Interview* KATHLEEN RENDA *Photography* MAURA McEVROY *Producer* DORETTA SPERDUTO

*rhapsody in bluegrass*





**ABOVE:** In the living room, the custom sofa is in a Claremont velvet. The antique Italian mirror is surrounded by a high-low mix of artworks, including a Picasso lithograph (top left) and Mexican folk art that Carter bought on the street in Tulum, Mexico (bottom left, top right). The curtains are in China Seas' Ziggurat. **RIGHT, TOP:** As a nod to utilitarian 1920s cook spaces, the kitchen wall is clad in subway tiles by Ann Sacks. Carter's stenciled design for the floor was so intricate that decorative painter Kim Comstock swore she'd never agree to do it again. Oven, Wolf. Hood, RangeCraft. **RIGHT, BOTTOM:** Carter and his partner, Bruner.



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**This home is a 1928 Greek Revival. Has that type of architecture always appealed to you?**

**MATTHEW CARTER:** I lusted after this place for years before nabbing it. It's quintessentially me, from the proportions to the properness to the white brick exterior to the location on a hilltop in a historic neighborhood planned by Frederick Law Olmsted. The previous owners had lived in it forever. The morning it hit the market, I pounced—by that evening, my partner, Brent Bruner, and I had sealed the deal. While the home was structurally solid, it hadn't been updated in 30 years. Luckily, Brent is an architect, and I was young and eager, and together, we tackled the redo gradually over the years.

**KATHLEEN RENDA:** It's an intriguing blend of elegant and edgy.

I've been an old soul since I was a kid, and I have a passion for making the past relevant for today. I grew up in Lexington, so Southern formality and hospitality are just part of who I am. These interiors have the symmetry, understated colors, and antiques that I love, but they aren't fusty. In the mix, there's also contemporary art, odd finds from my travels in Cambodia and Turkey, and vintage pieces. The resulting rooms are timeless and current.

**Your penchant for classicism also extends to the backyard.**

It's very structured, with a restrained simplicity and a tight palette. While I appreciate colorful gardens, it's strictly two hues here: the greens of the clipped topiaries, trees, and grass, and the whites of the potted geraniums and fencing. We do a lot of warm-weather entertaining, so the space is configured with parties in mind. Guests mingle with cocktails on the bluestone terrace. A pathway of locally quarried Kentucky limestone leads up to the pergola, near where we host dinners under the sycamore tree. It's magical, and worlds away from the landscaping when we first moved in, which was nonexistent.

**The dining room opens directly onto the terrace, which makes for a seamless indoor-outdoor flow.**

Through the French doors and screen doors, there is a breathtaking sight line straight to the end of the garden. But I wasn't aiming for an alfresco look. As a high-traffic space—the dining room is right behind the entrance hall, and we walk through it every day—I wanted it to feel happy and not so serious. The 1970s burl-wood Parsons table by Milo Baughman, which I was attracted to for its clean lines, helps lift the mood. A range of seating—vintage French and Italian chairs in chartreuse velvet, late-18th-century English chairs in lipstick-red leather—avoids matchy-matchyness. There's an antique English sideboard coexisting with pale blue walls, chartreuse curtains, and a cranberry glass scone. And a sisal rug, which I think prevents formal brown furniture from becoming too staid.

**For all of its adventurousness, the master bedroom seems restful.**

**Was that your number-one objective?**

To be honest, I didn't belabor it—I just brought together my favorite things. I envisioned a tall, streamlined bed that was a little Moorish; I designed this one in an abstract floral fabric with four slim posts. The walls are covered in a geometric-print linen, which adds texture. The antique slipper chair, redone in silk, is from my very first buying trip to Paris. It's all very unstudied. Sometimes, the less I think about it, the better it turns out.

**With all this improvisational eclecticism, did you ever worry that the rooms would lack coherence?**

I'd be more concerned if they were overthought. To me, interiors that are blatantly decorated for the purpose of decorating are static. Being instinctual has always worked for me. I go with my gut.



The dining room's French doors, painted in a custom color, stay open most of the year. Chartreuse curtains in a Jim Thompson Fabrics linen blend echo the velvet on vintage French side chairs and Italian host chairs. Walls in Benjamin Moore Gray Wisp. Sconce, Kevin L. Perry. Artwork, Anne Wehrley Björk.







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*I love weird, cool,  
 modern artwork. I'd  
 drain my wallet for  
 a fabulous painting.*”



**LEFT:** A valance and curtains in a fuchsia Manuel Canovas linen add sizzle to the master bedroom. Carter designed the bespoke bed, in a Claremont fabric, to graze the crown molding and “add the drama of height.” **BELOW LEFT:** To make over a worn mahogany chest from Bruner’s boyhood, Carter hired a local decorative painter to freehand a chinoiserie scene. “People mistake it for a pedigree antique,” Carter says. The Chinese lamp is from the estate of the late Lexington designer Ken Lloyd. **BELOW:** In the master bath, Waterworks’ marble tiles evoke a chic checkerboard. **OPPOSITE:** A Peter Fasano linen on the walls provides a graphic backdrop for a mixed-media work by Louis Zoellar Bickett II. Bedding, Leontine Linens. Pillow, Le Manach.







For a “deeper, darker” mood, Carter clad the study’s ceiling in wood veneer and the walls in a hand-painted metallic wallcovering, both from Maya Romanoff. Curtains in Sister Parish’s Tucker linen blend. The slipper chair is in Robert Kime’s Susani. Rug, Stark.  
**OPPOSITE:** Every spring, Carter scales a 40-foot ladder to hang potted ferns from the trees: “The chains visually disappear, so the plants appear to dangle in midair.” Pillows in a Perennials fabric with Schumacher fringe. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES

