



INTERIOR DESIGN, JULY/AUGUST 2013, PROJECT PROFILE

Farm Fresh

Alex Deringer of 2 Ivy Lane transforms a historic farmhouse into a casually elegant home

By Charlotte Safavi | Photography by Angie Seckinger

“Our home sits on two acres of land in the heart of Alexandria,” says Alex Deringer of the remodeled 1912 farmhouse that she shares with her husband and three children. “What appealed to us is that it’s cloistered, yet central.”

However, when they bought the house it was in bad shape, with dark, choppy rooms, a cumbersome rear addition from the 1970s and an overabundance of wood paneling. “We used to joke that the elves and trolls lived in the dingy, compartmentalized rooms,” says Deringer, who runs the design firm 2 Ivy Lane with partner Courtney Cox.



Working with McLean-based architect Thomas French, Deringer rolled up her sleeves and got down to the business of renovating the home to suit her family’s needs. “We took the back off and gutted most of the interior,” she recalls. “We kept the front of the house—the foyer, parlor and library—intact, and the kitchen retains its footprint. But the rest was reconfigured or added on.”

A limestone terrace, pool and gardens were all designed by landscape architect Susanne Fyffe.

An open floor plan now runs throughout the main level and most of the wood paneling is gone. In the front rooms, existing six-foot-high case openings were enlarged and raised up to seven feet, making the spaces brighter and more airy. The new rear addition encompasses a butler’s pantry, family room and dining room on the first floor, with a master suite on the second floor.

Rooms in the rear addition overlook the property’s lush gardens. “Our design concept was that we’ve got these fabulous outdoor areas for three seasons of the year,” says Deringer, discussing the strong architectural connection she and French made between the home’s interior and exterior spaces. “The outdoor rooms are great for everyday living and for the big parties we throw.”

Multiple French doors now open onto beautiful gardens designed by landscape architect Susanne Fyffe. The master bedroom, with its airy cathedral ceiling, has its own private balcony amid treetops. The extra glasswork filters natural light from room to room.

“Light’s such a valuable design commodity, whether natural during the day or artificial in the evening,” says Deringer, who studied interior design at the Corcoran College of Art and Design. “It adds to the mood and atmosphere of any room.” Her entire home is layered with recessed, chandelier, sconce, task and standing-lamp lighting options—all on dimmer switches.

When it came to overall décor, Deringer wanted a departure from her prior home, which was more traditional with bolder colors. In the new house, she selected quieter hues accented by pops of color in accessories. The nature of the home itself largely drove this approach. “It’s a historic farmhouse,” she explains, “and it has a more relaxed feel. I wanted something elegantly casual, with a sense of formality for entertaining guests, yet approachable because a family lives here.”

Deringer lent a subtle identity to each room, while allowing the soft palette to connect them. For example, the parlor boasts beige grass cloth walls and diminutive chairs in oat and pale blue fabrics; the dining room has silvery grey upholstered seating and a partition-wall papered in a trellis pattern with sheen; and the family room combines comfortability scaled furniture in similar colors.



The family room is housed in an addition at the back of the house.

An eclectic mix of new and vintage pieces prevails in every room. “My husband and I inherited a lot of family antiques with sentimental value,” says Deringer. “I like to incorporate them, but also to bring in more contemporary pieces.” In the dining room, she combined antique American corner cupboards and an old French farm table with dining chairs that are brand new. The juxtaposition of old and new, as well as of casual and formal, are cornerstones of Deringer’s transitional style.

However, she remains imminently practical. Dining chairs are covered in durable pleather and a custom-fitted tablecloth protects the dining table in a house where little ones come into play. The family room furniture is hardy, and also upholstered in stain-resistant and indoor/outdoor materials.

Just as important as meeting her family’s needs was Deringer’s desire to have a sophisticated home. She created flair with chic patterns and luxe fabrics on accent pillows and side chairs. “I added glamour to otherwise organic rooms by using gilded, metallic and mirrored elements, as well as with light fixtures that sparkle,” says Deringer. “We feel lucky to have found our diamond in the rough. It’s received a lot of TLC and we have a special home in a place we love.

Charlotte Safavi is a writer in Alexandria, Virginia. Photographer Angie Seckinger splits her time between Potomac, Maryland, and Spain.

RENOVATION ARCHITECTURE: THOMAS FRENCH, [Thomas French Architect PC](#), McLean, Virginia.

INTERIOR DESIGN: ALEX DERINGER, [2 Ivy Lane](#), Alexandria, Virginia.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE: SUSANNE FYFFE, Fyffe Landscape Architecture, Arlington, Virginia.

RENOVATION CONTRACTOR: RALPH CARDER and TRIP CARDER, Ralph Carder Company, Fredericksburg, Virginia.

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