Designing Women

written by SHERIL BENNETT TURNER & photographed by KRIS DECKER
Back in the 1980s, I was a big fan of the sitcom Designing Women starring Delta Burke, Dixie Carter, Annie Potts, and Jean Smart. The four friends, interior designers based in Atlanta, Georgia, always made decorating—and life—seem like so much fun. Local interior designer, Amy McKenzie Emery also hails from Atlanta and is full of the same tenaciousness and creativity, ready to handle any decorating challenge with southern charm and aplomb. Having just completed the 2008 Golf Magazine Dream Home, Amy tells how a chance encounter on a golf course helped drive her career path in Greenville.

After graduating with a degree in Interior Design from the University of Georgia in 1999, Amy was ready to go places, literally and figuratively. “I immediately moved out to Denver, Colorado,” she says. “I just had to go somewhere!” Intending to stay only a year, Amy found that she really liked Denver and her job at an architectural firm doing commercial interior design work, so one year turned into three. “But,” Amy says, “I had this great guy that I had dated all through college (Andre Emery, now her husband) who was here, plus all my family was closer to the East coast, so I decided to move to Greenville.” Once in town, Amy started calling local architectural firms. “I really wanted to work for a firm because I was used to that environment and I loved doing commercial work. But it seemed like no one was hiring designers with my level of experience, or they just weren’t calling me back.” Being the spitfire that she is, in 2002, Amy decided to open her own business, specializing in commercial interiors. Not long after, Amy’s husband and father-in-law ended up playing golf with none other than renowned local architect Don Gardner and his partner Bill Santerini, CEO of Allora, a firm that specializes in architectural design, construction, planning, and development. “Just in conversation,” Amy says, “it came up that I was an interior designer and as it turned out, they needed an interior designer. So I called and met up with them and ended up doing their first model home at the Cliffs of Glassy.” Since then, Amy has decorated all the model homes for Allora including the Cliffs at Walnut Cove and the Cliffs at Mountain Park, as well as Don Gardner’s personal home in Florida. “It’s amazing what can happen on the golf course,” laughs Amy.

Recently, Amy had the opportunity to do the interior design for Golf Magazine’s prestigious Dream House. For the past five years, Golf Magazine has selected one home located in a golf community for this honor, and this year that selection was Allora’s rustic natural stone, slate, and cedar shake fantasy home located on 1.32 acres in the Cliffs at Keowee Springs. Open to the public for viewing until September of 2009, the home then goes on the market.
has more of a resort feel to it versus a country-club focus, so that’s what we were trying to achieve with this house; a family could just move in here and it would feel like home.”

For the open-floor plan of the main level, Amy used a dark stain on the cedar ceiling beams that run throughout, and a mix of #1- and #2- grade hickory of varying width planks on the floors to give the home a rustic feel. In the two-story entryway, a herringbone pattern in the hardwood floors gives the space an extra pop. The great room features a circular wall of windows, which Amy left unadorned of window treatments in order to enjoy the fantastic view of three converging golf holes of the Tom Fazio-designed golf course that makes up the home’s backyard.

“On the main level, the view is really what it’s all about,” Amy says. “There is glass everywhere and the view is so breathtaking. On the inside, I tried to keep it relating to the outside by keeping the paint light, airy, and earthy. I didn’t want to do really dark, bright, or vivid colors because I didn’t want to take away from the view.” Amy also used paint to accent the varying ceiling heights and shapes including the unique circular ceiling in the breakfast nook, which was faux finished by Lee Stephens using a design inspired by a nautical star. “We wanted to do something that looked like a medallion without putting an actual medallion there,” explains Amy. “We also didn’t want to do

for approximately $3 million dollars, furnishings and all. Amy walked me through her interior design of the 5,200-square-foot, two-level house.

“In the décor of the home,” Amy explains, “we tried to do something that was casual, comfortable, and inviting—not stuffy—but livable. We didn’t want it to feel like a castle or over-the-top design. The Cliffs at Keowee Springs is more family-oriented and
anything gaudy, just something to define the area.”

Amy used an eclectic mix of furnishings, combining heavier European-influenced furniture and iron lighting, with lighter seagrass or sisal rugs and upholstery in soothing color palettes so nothing feels heavy or formal. There are also little creative surprises throughout with an Asian, Americana, European, and French flair, but the look is not overly stylized. “In the powder room there is a little hexagon glass mosaic in green, gold, and grey inset in the stone in the shower that looks like a quilt,” Amy says. “I also used a lot of really unique antique mirrored light fixtures throughout, like the Moravian star fixture featured in the entryway to the master retreat, to add texture and a touch of the old world, just a little bit of sparkle.”

While the open floor plan of the main level allows for extreme entertaining—there is even a screened-in room complete with outdoor grill, fireplace, and wet bar—when it’s time to escape from the day, the master retreat provides a calm and soothing place to relax. “The idea of the master bedroom,” says Amy “was again to keep it comfortable and earthy, but with a luxurious feel, more boutique and special.” The private retreat also includes his and hers closets, a built-in dressing area, and a well-appointed master bath designed to pamper in style.

The main level of the home also offers a formal dining room, a powder room, a hide-a-way bedroom for the children over the garage, and an office/bedroom with full bath.

Downstairs, the mood changes, and the focus is on fun and games. “As you go down the spiral staircase,” says Amy “the colors gradually get a little darker and there is darker stained paneling in the recreation rooms.” Along with the TV viewing area, the ultimate “man cave” includes a custom Kessick wine cellar tucked under the stairway, a bar, a billiards room, and—oh yea—a 350-square-foot Full Swing golf simulator system, designed to recreate over 50
world-class golf courses. “It’s like a life-sized video game,” Amy describes. There are also two immaculately appointed guest suites on the lower level, complete with private baths.

In addition to the Golf Magazine Dream House, Amy has been busy designing the interiors of condo models and interior sales centers for Allora’s condominium buildings at 155 RiverPlace and Terrace at RiverPlace. This in turn has led to the interior design of the Field House at West End Greenville overlooking the Greenville Drive baseball stadium, the Chicora in Greenville, and the Fitzgerald Condominiums at the Grove Park Inn Resort. “I think the word got out that “this girl” does condo buildings,” laughs Amy. But I would venture to say that Amy’s best design yet arrived 21 months ago, daughter Ella. While still pregnant with Ella, Amy ran into old friend and former colleague, Kim Jackson. “Amy was totally pregnant, and she had this crazy look about her,” Kim says with a smile.

“I was up to my ears in work,” Amy laughs, “because I have a hard time saying no to anything.” It was the perfect time for Amy to do a little recruitment. “I needed someone I could trust and who had a lot of design experience. Kim stepped in at just the right moment.” Amy and Kim are now partners, and the “designing women” behind id studio interiors.

“I’ve really been fortunate in the things that I’ve gotten to do and the people I’ve met since I came to Greenville,” Amy says. “I’ve been able to get my foot in the door with some really great people in the industry, and my partnership with Allora has just been great. It has opened up a lot of doors for me because they recommend me to their clients. It’s been a busy six years, and I’m really enjoying it!”

Id studio interiors is located in the Venue 4 Design building at 415 West Washington Street in downtown Greenville. For more information, please call (864) 271-9499, or visit their website at www.idstudiointeriors.com.

Picture of Master Retreat: Amy kept the color palette and furnishings of the boutique-style master bedroom simple and clean to highlight the architectural details of the room. Custom roman shades by Shades in Greenville add a touch of texture and color to the room without blocking the breathtaking views outside.

Picture of Dining Room: The warm and inviting dining room exudes old world elegance with its mixture of European-influenced furnishings and iron lighting fixtures, paired with an elegant natural color palette.

Picture of Great Room: Soothing earth tones punctuated by subtle pops of color in the great room don’t distract from the main event—the magnificent view out the wall of windows to the Tom Fazio-designed golf course beyond.

Picture of Master Bath: It’s not hard to feel pampered in the luxurious master bath, which features a unique grasscloth-like wallcovering, custom cabinetry, and marble countertop. The black slate floor is embellished with travertine mosaics tiles that echo the tumbled travertine of the tub surround.

Picture of Kitchen: All of the modern conveniences are tucked tastefully into this made-for-entertaining cottage-style kitchen, which opens up to the breakfast nook and the great room. Features include DuPont certified granite countertops, custom cabinets by Atwood Fine Architectural Cabinetry, appliances by KitchenAid and Whirlpool, and decorative lighting by City Lights in Greenville.