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Julie and Al Barnes of Montgomery spent nine months on the search for the perfect house in Fairhope: What they eventually bought was far from perfect—with small rooms and a very outdated 1950s style—but with her artist's eye, the Barnes' daughter Emily saw the potential. "She made me look again. She kept saying, 'this is it,' until I believed her," Julie Barnes says sitting in the sunlight-filled great room of the home that has been totally transformed.

M 50S FAB



photography by Randy Lee



Old Fairhope Ranch House Is Transformed into

Modern Work of Art



“We bought the house without talking to an architect, which was risky,” Barnes admits, “but we were convinced that the house had amazing potential. The location is fantastic: it’s on a half-acre lot, which gave us the space we wanted for a pool, and it’s just blocks from downtown or Mobile Bay.”

Barnes credits the work of two “visionaries,” Clay Adams of Walcott Adams Verneulle Architects in Fairhope, and John Grant Gordon of JG Gordon Interiors in Orange Beach. “We told Clay that we didn’t want the typical Fairhope Arts and Crafts-style bungalow. He understood and worked with us to create these wonderful open and light-filled spaces. It was important to have the right space to feature Emily’s art. Then, working with John Grant, we created a space that is minimalist and timeless yet comfortable and classic. We found ways to

incorporate some of the old house—we kept the floors and reused a few of the doors—and also brought in a few wonderful vintage pieces.”

Gordon says the house is unique to our area. “There’s nothing cookie cutter about it, and I love that. Some designers have a signature look or color, but I don’t. To me, it’s all about working creatively with the client. I found furnishings and accessories that were a perfect fit, but this house was not a one-person show, it took a lot of input to create, and it was a fabulous project to work on.”



Clay Adams, who has worked in Fairhope for more than 20 years, says revitalizing a classic ranch-style house was a fun challenge. "When you are updating an old bungalow, there are obvious details to save, but we found good ways to add interest and yet keep it so that the house didn't overpower the neighborhood."





The inside and outside of the all-white house work well together. “Sometimes the exterior of a house is completely different from the inside. Here it is seamless,” Adams said. “The interior is really a backdrop for Emily’s art: it takes center stage when you walk in. But the combination of her art, the white backdrop, and the natural light all goes hand-in-hand.”

As an artist, Emily Barnes says she derives energy from the sun and water to create her works that are inspired by the reflections and optic transformations that occur in and around an aquatic environment. So working from the studio that is attached to her bedroom is inspirational. “I can look out at the pool and watch how the light moves throughout the day. It’s a wonderful place to work but it’s comforting, too, because I’m not isolated from the rest of the family.”

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ABOVE: Master Bedroom - Designer John Gordon Grant turned two old Moroccan window screens into a headboard for the Master Bedroom.

RIGHT: Bathrooms - Double beaded Pickwick pine paneling from the original home was saved, painted, and reused in two of the home's four baths.



An all-white house isn't for everyone, Julie Barnes admits, but from the painted brick outside to the painted wood floors inside, she couldn't be happier. "It's white, but there's nothing sterile about it. It's a very comfortable, livable home for my family. It's exactly what we wanted."

ABOVE: Working from the studio that is attached to her bedroom is inspirational. "I can look out at the pool and watch how the light moves throughout the day. It's a wonderful place to work but it's comforting, too, because I'm not isolated from the rest of the family."



Designer - John Grant Gordon
 JG Gordon Interiors
 Architect - Clay Adams
 Walcott, Adams, Verneuille Architects
 Artist - Emily Barnes

