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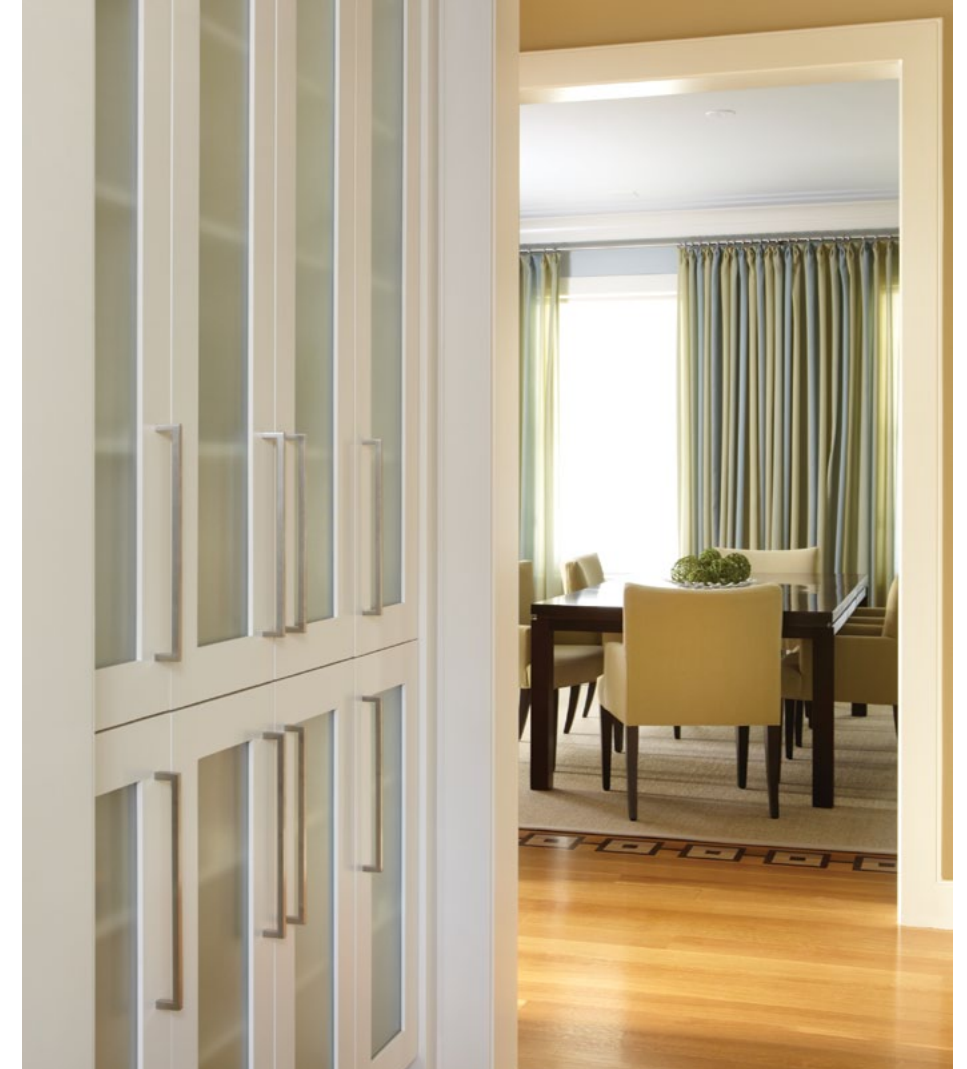
At Home with CNN's
KATE BOLDUAN

A Perfect Blend

A talented design team melds
modern and classic in a
home for builder Jim Gibson
and his wife Dana

BY JULIE SANDERS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY TIMOTHY BELL





In the spacious family room (previous pages), designer Skip Sroka cultivated a clean-lined, inviting sensibility with furniture from Hickory Chair and R Jones grouped around a fireplace clad in poured concrete and flanked by concrete-topped built-ins. Adjoining it, the crisp white kitchen (left) features a breakfast nook, where Jim and Dana Gibson (opposite, bottom) gather for meals. The artfully paneled refrigerator (below) provides a focal point, while the butler's pantry (above) leads into the dining room.



Jim Gibson is known for the tasteful, elegant houses he constructs throughout the DC area—including, recently, his own classic yet modern residence in the Somerset neighborhood of Chevy Chase, Maryland. After living nearby in a very traditional home, Gibson and his wife Dana were ready for something different. They bought an 8,700-square-foot lot with a non-descript rancher on it with the intention of tearing it down; Gibson tapped GTM Architects, a frequent collaborator, to design the plans, and Skip Sroka for the interiors.

“Jim is very experienced and it was clear from the beginning that he knew what he was after,” says GTM’s principal, George T. Myers. “The goal was for the house to fit the neighborhood, but he also wanted some elements on the outside that would indicate a more contemporary interior.”

As is typical for Gibson, who is very efficient, the project proceeded apace. “We built the house in about 10 months,” he says.

ARCHITECTURE: GEORGE T. MYERS, AIA, NCARB, principal; DOUG ROBERTS, project manager, GTM Architects, Inc., Bethesda, Maryland. **INTERIOR DESIGN:** SKIP SROKA, ASID, CID, Sroka Design, Inc., Bethesda, Maryland. **BUILDER:** JIM GIBSON, Gibson Builders, Washington, DC.

“We were living in it within a year of settling on the property.”

Of course, the surprise in all this is less the efficiency of the project than its tremendous result. With help from Myers and Sroka, Gibson and his wife have created a remarkably stylish yet comfortable home—every inch of which was designed to their specifications and with their vision of home in mind. It not only perfectly fits the surrounding neighborhood of older houses, but it also exudes a serene, modern vibe that captures visitors’ hearts and minds the minute they walk in the door.

In fact, that is actually what happened when, soon after moving in, the Gibsons welcomed visitors who looked around the home and offered to buy it on the spot, furniture and decoration included. The Gibsons, with the confidence of people who know how to build their dream house, accepted the offer.

In the meantime, they are happy to tour their home while it’s still theirs, basking in the perfect melding of traditional Queen Anne, Shingle-style exterior architecture and the clean, crisp lines and soft, restful palette that Sroka so deftly incorporated throughout the interiors. “We wanted the exterior to fit the neighborhood and we liked the idea of the contemporary interior as a surprise,” Gibson says. “I wanted to come home from work every night and feel like I was going into a really nice hotel.”





An abstract painting conveys the restful palette of pale green and blue that Sroka and Dana Gibson selected for the living room (this page) and the dining room (opposite), where a stenciled floor strikingly frames the rug and table and a starburst mirror from Baker draws the eye.

Sroka clearly understood this vision. “It was collaborative,” he says. “First we worked on room and lighting layouts and finishes, then furniture. The final stage is fabrics and colors. As you work, other elements become apparent. It’s a revealing process.”

In order to create a modern sensibility, the couple willingly relinquished pretty much everything they had owned before. “What we had was traditional,” Dana Gibson says. “We sold all of the furniture, everything. We wanted a new look. We wanted to be uncluttered.” An inveterate collector, Jim Gibson sold all his collections save one: a vibrant assortment of vintage posters. “I sold about 80 of them,” he offers—a remarkable statement given the number of them still adorning the walls. Beautifully framed in all

shapes and sizes, they complement the couple’s new, streamlined décor. And, incidentally, they are the one decorative element that the Gibsons will not be leaving behind for the new owners.

The five-bedroom, five-and-a-half-bath house includes a finished basement complete with media room, workout room, wine cellar and guest suite, and a finished third floor housing the Gibsons’ 15-year-old son’s en suite bedroom and adjoining sitting room. The second floor encompasses what Gibson calls the “hotel-like” master suite, along with a home office and a guest suite.

On the main floor, harmony prevails with a palette of light blue, soft beige and charcoal that unites the living, dining and family rooms. Sroka honed in on solid, textured upholstery and





The master bedroom (left), with its uncluttered atmosphere, is a restful retreat for the Gibsons (and their dog Cody). Sroka designed the carpet and headboard. The master bath (below) is clad in shades of limestone while the adjacent dressing area (above) boasts wall-to-wall walnut cabinetry. Jim Gibson's study (opposite, bottom) is painted chocolate brown to showcase his prized vintage posters.

simple, clean-lined draperies, and adorned surfaces with just the right accessories to provide warmth and interest. He designed subtly paneled ceilings, painting them all a soft blue; quarter-sawn wide-plank rift oak floors cover the ground floor, unifying the space.

When it came time to design the roomy, light-filled kitchen, Dana Gibson was inspired. "I'd seen these wonderful paneled pantry doors in a magazine," she says. "We decided to convert them into refrigerator doors." Custom cabinetry in three different finishes subtly delineates the work zones of the kitchen and the paneled fridge provides a focal point. "I didn't want tile," Dana says, "so we used back-painted glass for the backsplash, which really reflects the light."

Light was a high priority for the Gibsons, so Sroka and Dana Gibson spent a lot of time creating the right lighting plan. It includes lights under the kitchen island and bathroom cabinets (to convey a sense that they're floating), on each step of the staircase and behind the dropped ceiling in the foyer. "At night," says Jim Gibson, "the lighting makes the house spectacular." ♦

Timothy Bell is a photographer with studios in Washington, DC, and New York City.

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