

Published September 11th, 2013

## The Home Designer Dreamy Empty Nest

By Brandon Neff



Photos courtesy Brandon Neff Design

Finally! After too many years of play dates and tantrums, Jello stains and slip covered furniture, you're waving goodbye to the last of the litter headed off to University, and saying hello to the idea of rediscovering long-ago tabled projects and a home designed just for you. You try and suppress that wide eyed grin spreading across your face as their car makes its final turn off your street - you're free!

Sure, it's hard to adjust after all those sleepless nights and carpools, but hey, think about all the extra space, soothing quiet and beautiful fabric coming your way! Remember, you're not losing a son (or daughter); you're gaining your sanity and a healthy dose of refined living. And, nowhere else is that newfound calm needed than in the bedroom - your place to decompress, recharge and dream. And so, to bed.

When designing a bedroom I always think about ways to bring serenity and texture to the space. How you end each day, and greet the next should be spent in a room filled with notes that soothe all of your senses - color, fabric, lighting and art - all in concert to lull you off to sleep at night and wrap you in comfort when you awake.

For this project, I was commissioned by a busy couple - an ER doc and his partner who heads global marketing for a major motion picture studio - to transform their lackluster master suite from dated to drop dead gorgeous. During our initial conversations, the only clues I gleaned about their expectations for the space was their desire for a room to lounge in and provide a place to unwind. The rest was up to my imagination - a fantasy project for any designer.

From the very beginning, I knew I wanted the room to shimmer - natural light was abundant, and I envisioned harnessing that light to full effect. Everything had to have interest, texture and luminosity. I achieved this with a few key materials: a silvery grass cloth wall covering, mohair velvet accents and a variety of finishes including polished chrome, horn, silk, bone and malachite.

With a pared down palette and only a few accessories, the fabrics needed to take center stage to cushion my clients from floor to ceiling. Installing full length linen draperies (50 yards worth!), and custom cornice boxes gave the windows and French doors real presence. Lengths of charcoal gray wool were used to upholster the dressing room and walk-in closet walls, along with striped linen Roman shades for the smaller windows. Accent fabrics in emerald, celadon and jade were used to infuse real depth to the pale scheme.

To keep the room from becoming too sweet, I added an exotic Ikat accent fabric to the custom bedding and ottoman - its classic motif holds all the hues in the room and adds a little visual tension - something I feel every space needs to keep things interesting.

Tip: to contrast the pale tone-on-tone area rug, I had the floors stained a deeper walnut - a great trick to help make a room look taller - the floors recede giving the ceilings more height.

I designed the custom bed with an exaggerated wing back headboard, again to draw the eye upward and add height. A pair of swivel chairs in a cream boucle, and a black Saarinen side table ground the sitting area beneath a contemporary drum pendant in the corner. Lastly, after a bit of cajoling, we settled on an atmospheric photograph for the only adorned wall. It features a time-worn apartment lobby complete with graffiti art and layers of patina coating the classical mouldings.

Surely, we didn't forget about a cozy movie night, so a state-of-the-art television and surround sound was installed with all of the components tucked away in the walk-in closet. I'm not usually an advocate of a TV in the bedroom, but I balanced its size with the gas fire insert giving it a more balanced appearance.

As in all my work, I installed three zones of lighting: recessed cans for overall light and artwork; decorative sconces for accent; and unique table lamps for specific task lighting.

Remember, lighting is essential - without it you'll never see the beautiful details in your new space.

Tip: for a cleaner look, use three inch LED or halogen cans - great light with a smaller profile trim.

Designing a restful bedroom, or living room for that matter, just takes thoughtful consideration of how you want to live in that room. Figuring out what colors and textures speak to you is the first step. Look for inspiration - a calm ocean, a grove of trees or a winter sky can all provide all the ideas you need to create something soothing.

Everyone I work with has their own individual style and taste level. My job is to ascertain what really moves

them and makes them feel most at home. As you design your own empty nest take a pause to reflect, and ask yourself what elements truly inspire you. Dream big.



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