

For sheer sophistication, it would be hard to top the unexpected palette of blues and browns in the main living room of the Alotian Club in Little Rock. Voluptuous wool satin curtains are edged in punchy wool felt, both from Holland & Sherry; the honeycomb rug is by Hokanson. Lounge chairs in woven cotton and sofas in linen velvet are placed around low parchment tables by David Kleinberg. Edelman suede in dusky lavender covers Holly Hunt armchairs, inspired by an Italian Directoire design. A center table skirted in Bennison's Wheatflower linen divides the room. Double gourd lamps are by John Thompson, mirror-back sconces from Marvin Alexander.

happiness now...

traditional!

INTERIOR DESIGN BY DAVID KLEINBERG
INTERVIEW BY CHRISTOPHER PETKANAS
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIC PIASECKI



Custom-stenciled burlap from Zina Studios on the walls of the Alotian's men's grill room lends the cathedral-height space a honeyed warmth. Scalamantré's Millbrook bobbin chairs and Charles of London lounge chairs are covered in Rogers & Goffigon's Parramore Island linen and Mottisfont blend, respectively. Brissac chandelier by Dessin Fournir.

OPPOSITE: A 19th-century French giltwood mirror hangs above the mantel in the library.



CHRISTOPHER PETKANAS: This is obviously not your grandfather's golf club. It feels like a real house, down to the vintage quilts on the beds.

DAVID KLEINBERG: The goal at the Alotian Club, which I worked on in collaboration with the architect, Mark Finlay, outside Little Rock, was to create exteriors and interiors that feel residential. The Alotian suggests a classic Southern 19th-century plantation house, one that has been expanded over time and converted into a clubhouse, with freestanding cottages—there are three—and furnishings that have been passed down through generations. It's proper and gracious without being buttoned-up. If comfort is luxury, then the Alotian Club is luxurious.

The idiom you chose is clearly traditional, but not too traditional. How did you pull that off?

The antiques are English and American, the reproductions are top-shelf, and the upholstery is custom. User-friendly woven cottons, cotton chenilles, and linens—all fresh textures—keep the mood young. Despite the high level of detail, I think the Alotian has a certain simplicity, an almost humble quality.

People always worry about mixing antiques with reproductions. Any tips?

Look at the cottage living room. The trick is to respect the scale of the antiques. Reproductions are often scaled up for modern comfort, and they can overpower antiques. Finish is another thing to watch out for. I would never put a wood-finish reproduction next to a wood-finish antique, because the reproduction always suffers beside the real thing. Much better a painted-finish reproduction next to a wood-finish antique.

The main living room has two almost-but-not-quite-mirror-image furniture arrangements, separated by a huge skirted center table. What's the lesson here?

You just said it—"almost." That's the lesson. There are two full-height armoires against the wall on one side of the room. On the opposite wall is a glass-fronted secretary. In other words, there's symmetry but it isn't absolutely perfect symmetry.

Pine paneling has a lot of unfortunate associations, from rec rooms to sports bars. Yet the way you handled it in the library is elegant, even sexy.

It's all in the finish. It took us countless tries to get the degree of wax and depth of color right. The paneling is the color of the favorite baseball mitt you had as a kid—and that you still have as an adult.

I've always wondered how decorators decide when to apply fabric directly to a wall, and when to upholster it.

I want a crisp look, so I paste the cloth right on the wall, as I did in the dining room and grill room, where I used a burlap stenciled in a stylized Tree of Life repeat. You never mistake

pasted-on fabric for wallpaper—it still reads as fabric. Even when I upholster a wall I use thin batting and no trim.

How about the twin screened porches with the bare brick floors at either end of the house?

They're furnished with Aiken sofas, the classic America porch sofa. I scaled down the original design, which is really quite sleepable, and added a chair.

It's impossible not to notice the attention you lavished on the curtains here.

Well, you don't spend 16 years working for Sister Parish and Albert Hadley without cultivating a love of curtains.

While we're on the subject, any feeling about length?

Like a gentleman's trousers, curtains should have a generous break—and not a millimeter more.

It's not easy decorating to please both sexes, but that is your great triumph here. Is there a recipe?

All my career I've been told I do masculine rooms that women are comfortable in. Men don't want to feel like they're sleeping in a bower of peonies. So if I want to use a floral fabric, I choose one with thorny flowers rather than blowsy English roses. Deep, earthy colors rather than candy-box ones. Printed linen rather than glazed chintz. Then everyone's happy.

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"In the main living room, I wanted you to be able to read what was happening at the windows from across the room, yet nothing too aggressive, so I used bright, graphic, looping wool-felt trim on a dark wool-satin base cloth."

"The straight-hanging gingham curtains layered behind high-caught asymmetrical cotton floral ones in the dining room is a romantic, slightly antebellum design. Were it not for the fabrics, the scale of the room might have made the space too formal."



"Curtains have a reputation for being old and fussy, but they don't have to be. Look at these in the ladies' lounge. The unfinished molded-wood fringe makes the design so fresh, young, and sharp. The trick with classic curtains is knowing when to stop. Don't over-swig. Stay trim."



"This curtain is asymmetrical when viewed alone, but symmetrical when viewed with its pair on the other side of the bed. Though they are separated by a quite large expanse of wall, I approached the windows as a team."

"The library curtains are more masculine, but the tailored box-pleated valance isn't stiff—it doesn't read like a board. And the stacked rows of plain cotton tape have more weight and impact than if I'd used only one thick band."



"Lambrequins are a good solution when you want shape and movement but not 2,000 yards of smothering silk taffeta. The hall has four windows—full-blown curtains and valances would have been overwhelming."



THIS PAGE, ABOVE: Kleinberg pays tribute to all-American decorator Albert Hadley in a bedroom with a Barton-Sharpe cannonball bed and shams and bedskirt in Bennison maple-leaf linen. Millerton carpet from Patterson, Flynn & Martin; Roman shade in Chelsea Editions ticking. THIS PAGE, BELOW: In the sitting room, Sindri cotton from Manuel Canovas was used for the chairs, curtains, and valances. OPPOSITE: A cottage bedroom's curtains are in Bantry House hand-printed linen from Scalamandré. Old and new mix beautifully with the 19th-century oak armchair from Ann-Morris Antiques and a Kleinberg-designed bed.

"The cottage bedrooms all evoke country houses. They're accessorized with cachepots, candlesticks, throws, baskets, trays, interesting little boxes—all the wonderful refinements and subtleties one associates with traditional decorating. It makes me sad when I see this way of life abandoned just because people feel the need to be 'modern.'"





Built by Gurfein Woodwork and with cushions in a crisp Brunswick & Fils pinstripe, the Aiken sofas (grouped with matching chairs) on the screened porch are an old favorite of David Kleinberg's mentor and former boss, Albert Hadley, aka the Dean of American Decorating. The room is a salute to the South, with an iron twig mirror from Holly Hunt, lanterns by Deep Landing Workshop, and wicker furniture from Laneventure. OPPOSITE: Before golfing, a scrumptious breakfast. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES.

