

Perfect timing brings Jennifer Elmore and France Kenyon together to redecorate a house on the river.

REFRESH, REPURPOSE AND REJOICE

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Some people are meant to meet. Take Jennifer Elmore and France Kenyon, for instance. While Elmore, who owns A Shade Better and Jennifer Elmore Interior Design, was in her second-floor studio working on a project, France was in the showroom below, looking for a lampshade. As luck would have it, Elmore went downstairs in search of some artwork and the two women met.

The timing couldn't have been better for France. "For a number of years I had been struggling with the tone of our home. I wanted the rooms to exude serenity, calm and beauty as our lives are so hectic with all that my husband Bill and I do," she says. She had previously tried various approaches, but nothing came close to what she envisioned. She was ready to try again. Seizing the moment, France invited Elmore to her house to take a look around and talk about what could be done over a cup of coffee.

As a result, Elmore saw both the problems and the possibilities. "France wanted her rooms to feel like her, to be personal, not 'decorated,' but she didn't know how to make that happen. She had some wonderful collections, which were very important to her. Some were hers, and others belonged to her mother;

France and Bill Kenyon and Tripper, their German shepherd and constant shadow, enjoy their restyled surroundings, thanks to interior designer Jennifer Elmore.

In the foyer, a Baker chair, glass-topped skirted table, books and flowers set a welcoming scene.





Sketches France's mother collected and treasured were found under a bed. Now framed and displayed, they are grouped above a sofa in the Kenyons' living room.

but they weren't being used to their full beauty," says Elmore. "France and I share a love of antiques and unique one-of-a-kind items, so we really connected."

That connection led France to ask Elmore for a design concept that would include the living and dining areas and fit within a budget she and Bill had agreed on. They were hoping

for a more personal approach that would reflect their lifestyle and be dog-friendly for Tripper, their German shepherd and constant shadow.

Elmore had the living room sofa recovered and added a layer of back cushions to make it more inviting and comfortable. The antique, marble-top coffee table was updated with soft ivory, blue-gray, cream, gilt and bronze tones.







When the Kenyons moved to John's Island 22 years ago, they brought some of the most treasured possessions from their former home in Greenwich, Conn. with them. They also relocated their publishing and marketing business, CSI Inc., to Vero Beach. The couple's busy schedules include not only work-related responsibilities, but volunteer commitments as well.

France became involved with Indian River Habitat for Humanity 13 years ago. She has chaired both the board of directors and advisory board and currently serves on the nonprofit organization's development committee. She is also a member of the Indian River Medical Center Foundation's board of directors. Bill has been busy as well, having served on the Indian River Shores Town Council for eight years, two as vice mayor and two as mayor; and he continues to be involved with issues facing the town and Vero Beach.

Knowing that France and Bill were open to new ideas and eager to get started, Elmore began the design process by questioning, listening and observing. "I try to really understand how the client likes to live and what their dream for their home is. It's their special place," she explains. "I ask them what's in their closets and attics that they aren't using as I often find new meaning for items. I try to use as many of their furnishings as possible — redesigning, recovering, refinishing and repurposing

A "tired" antique French wood-framed settee was given new life, thanks to new springs and upholstery. Placed at an angle in the living room, it becomes part of the conversation area. Figurines France and her mother collected are displayed in the antique French cabinet beside the settee.



A soft charcoal creates a beautiful background for a series of French oyster plates displayed in the cabinet in the dining room. New silk drapery panels with a gimp braid are classic and timeless.

them. My goal is to create timeless interiors. I believe my client's home should be a total expression of who they are," says Elmore, who delights in finding new meaning for treasures gathering dust in some remote corner. In the Kenyons' case, sketches of figures and faces cherished by France's mother were under a bed just waiting to be rediscovered.

"I had six pieces of her mother's artwork framed and displayed in a

statement grouping above the sofa in the living room. They're perfect and personal," Elmore says, smiling as she points them out. "I also had the sofa recovered and changed the two-seat cushions to one cushion. Then I added another layer of back cushions to make the sofa look entirely different and much more inviting."

Elmore didn't stop there. She gathered figurines France and her mother had collected over the years and

arranged them in an antique French cabinet where they could be seen and admired. She also reupholstered four chairs, removed the skirts from two of them and repainted the legs – giving them new life. The base of an antique marble-top coffee table was repainted to blend with the palette of soft ivory, blue-gray, cream, gilt and bronze tones that are seen throughout the living room.

“I love attention to detail and special trims,” says Elmore who found an antique French wood-framed settee that needed new springs and upholstery. “The legs were painted this wonderful old original blue-gray, so I had it rebuilt and recovered in a French textile, then placed it at an angle, making it part of the conversation area.”

Rearranging furniture comes naturally to Elmore, who began moving her bedroom furniture around when she was a little girl, delighting in the repositioning of a bedside table or dresser. After growing up in Vero Beach and graduating from Saint Edward’s in 1975, Elmore went to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where she was on the swim team. More importantly, that’s where she met her husband John. They were married in 1979 and opened A Shade Better in 1985. The Elmore’s also own The Lamp & Shade Shop in Greenville, N. C. Over the years, both have expanded to include Elmore’s interior design business.

With happy clients like France who is spreading the word, it’s easy to understand why Elmore

In the dining room glazed blue-tone grass paper covers the walls. An antique celadon bowl holds an arrangement of orchids and Spanish moss.







A chair upholstered in a rich blue textile is placed next to a table where a grouping of France's treasures, including an antique mirror, find a home. Asian pottery vessels in linen-white fill in blank spaces.

has been so successful. Once you see the before photographs and step inside the Kenyons' front door, you can appreciate the difference. Where once there was a lonely looking bench in the foyer, now a vignette featuring a Baker chair covered in cut velvet, a fringe skirted round table and cut glass vase filled with flowers welcome family and friends.

The dining room is an inspired mélange of old and new. A treasured, antique, pink lamp France found in Savannah sheds its glow on the buffet. Elmore painted the inside of the cabinets a soft charcoal, the perfect complement to a series of antique oyster plates she found while in Paris. The walls are covered with a glazed grass paper in the same blue tones as

the living room. She also created an eye-catching centerpiece for the dining room table by filling an antique celadon bowl with live orchids and Spanish moss that was hanging from an oak tree in the Kenyons' front yard. White Asian pottery pieces gleam in previously open spaces.

For the family room, Elmore had the walls repainted a blue-gray and replaced a ceiling fan with an antique English chandelier. She recovered the sofas with a dog-friendly muted gray fabric, adding pillows to make them more contemporary and comfortable. On the wall above she placed a round, antique, English pine, convex mirror. An antique French cabinet provides the perfect base for the flat-screen television, and two new matching chairs complete the picture.

At this time of the year, France and Bill enjoy relaxing on the veranda after a day of work and meetings. As always, Tripper is at their side. With the river in full view, all three enjoy the peaceful setting Elmore created. "My design inspiration came from the colors I saw as I looked out at the water. I ordered comfortable outdoor furniture and used fabrics for the cushions in soft blues, whites and gray," says Elmore who added an Asian sideboard and antique cement and stone pieces as well as mirrors to create the outdoor living space.

The two women met, shared a cup of coffee and agreed on what needed to be done in August, with the understanding that everything would be in place by the end of November. "France really wanted to have Thanksgiving in her home," Elmore explains. Mission accomplished, early and on budget.

France remembers the day everything came together. "We were told to leave the house and stay away until the



A table in the family room features an arrangement of pottery, fresh cut flowers and a tray where Bill keeps his favorite things.

installation was completed,” she says. “When Bill and I walked in the front door and saw our totally transformed home, it was so much better than we ever thought it would be! Jennifer used all the special items I had tucked away, and today our home is just the way we always wanted. We couldn’t be happier.”

When all is said and done, Elmore says that’s what counts. “What I enjoy most about the design process is the sheer joy my clients have when they see the final results. The smiles that come over their faces are like, ‘Wow!’” she exclaims with a clap of her hands. “The most important events of their lives take place in these rooms, and I am grateful that their home design has been fully realized.”

France is as well. “Although Bill didn’t really know why we were ‘updating,’ he went along with the idea because he knew I wanted it,” she admits. “Now he loves it so much he wants to stay home all the time. He often tells me how beautiful

Existing sofas in the family room were updated with a dog-friendly fabric and plump pillows to make a too-deep sofa more comfortable. An antique English chandelier replaced a ceiling fan and an antique mirror found a new home.







After a long workday, France and Bill's favorite place to relax is on the veranda with Tripper. An Asian sideboard, framed mirrors, and antique cement and stone pieces add interest to the outdoor living space.



everything is. It's because the soft and peaceful look inside allows the trees, flowers, blue sky and water outside to be more vibrant. That's what was missing before. Now we tend to experience the inside and outside together in a more harmonious way."

She continues, "Our home is the way we wanted, not what someone else might want. That's what makes Jennifer so special. She listens. She's creative but not pushy; she's also imaginative and has an incredible sense of understated style and grace. We had fun together and I can't wait to do more." ❀

New outdoor furnishings featuring soft blue, white, and gray fabrics say, "come and sit a spell."