

HGTV room makeover makes stars of Memphis couple and decorator

By Linda A. Moore
Contact
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They're all getting used to being recognized.

Since appearing in the Feb. 9 episode of HGTV's "Designers' Challenge," Drs. Steve and Sylvia Richey and their interior decorator Jackie Glisson, get recognized a lot.

"I got on a plane to Las Vegas and a lady kept looking at me," Glisson said. "Finally she asked, 'Didn't I just see you on television the other night?'"

When Glisson said, yes, "She leaned over to her husband and said 'I told you it was him.'"

The Richeys chose Glisson, who owns Just a Decorator, to redo a nearly empty room in their 1970s-era East Memphis home.

On "Designers' Challenge," which airs locally on Thursdays at 8:30 p.m., homeowners provide the money for the makeover and select the person for their project after presentations from three design professionals. The projects require a minimum budget of \$20,000.

"We essentially started with an empty room and we didn't even know how we wanted to use the room," Sylvia said.

Since the makeover, which involved painting dark and dated paneling, updating furniture and adding an unusual window treatment called a lambrequin -- a three-sided cornice-- the room has become a comfy adult family room and a great place to entertain.

The Richeys applied to "Designers' Challenge" after seeing a notice for the show in The Commercial Appeal.

"This was not a surprise show," said Sylvia, an oncologist at the West Clinic. "That was what I like about it. I had input. I didn't want to be surprised."

The couple liked all three proposals. "There was not a design we didn't like," Steve said.

"They were all really great designs and we appreciated the work that went into them," Sylvia said.

They chose Glisson because he addressed every issue they had about the room, including the wood-paneled walls, the red-brick fireplace, the need for more lighting and their desire to update the bar.

"He was able to stretch our budget and address every single thing," Sylvia said.

Glisson met with the Richeys for 30 or 45 minutes, spending most of that time with Sylvia. Steve popped in for a minute or two with one request, that the room include a wine cooler with a humidor.

"I said, if I can find this wine cooler with this humidor, I will win this competition," Glisson said.

It now sits inside the redesigned bar below Sylvia's collection of crystal barware and a contemporary green glass sink bowl.

"So now, the funny thing is, all my patients are bringing me cigars," said Steve, a pain specialist at the Mid-South Pain Treatment Center in Southaven.

Glisson did the family room in varying shades of greens and golds, with natural elements, contemporary pieces and antiques.

"I wanted the room to feel like it was pulled together over time," Glisson said. "We mixed pieces and periods and pulled it all together with fabric."



Nikki Boertman/The Commercial Appeal

A room that was once dark and largely unused was transformed into a cheerful family space by Glisson.

The dominant fabric is a green and gold medallion print that covers the curved sofa. Glisson used a limestone-topped antique French dresser as a sofa table.

"They cut the legs off when I wasn't looking," Sylvia said.

"It was too tall. It had to be done," Glisson said.

A contemporary art piece of woven willow branches hangs behind two upholstered Chinese Chippendale arm chairs.

Contemporary paintings by Memphis artist Patti Smith are also used.

Since the show aired, they've gotten calls from old friends and classmates and even e-mails from strangers, some questioning their choices. In particular, folks want to know why they painted over the wood paneling.

Glisson has a ready answer. For one, they have the same paneling in the living room.

"And because of the deep overhang of the porch, this room would have been so dark, it would have been like having people hibernate."

Glisson left the dark brown brick floor (another move questioned by e-mailers). The couple liked the floor, it was in almost all of the downstairs rooms and it would have been too difficult to change.

He softened it in the conversation area with an oriental rug in soft colors.

He also kept the family's antique game table, but re-covered the seats of the matching chairs.

Now that the room is finished, it's used by the adults for entertaining and by the couple's three children, Spencer, 9, Seth, 4, Sarah, who is almost 2. A second daughter is due in about two weeks.

Since doing the show, Glisson says, they've all become good friends.

"The other nice thing is, we're redoing the kitchen now," he said.

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