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Real Estate

Family photos create ever- [Print] [Email] changing interior design

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By: Merlisa Lawrence Corbett Special to The Washington Examiner August 1, 2010

When Alison Griffin and her husband Paul planned their wedding, they decided to allocate a high percentage of the budget toward photography.

"As opposed to the band and table decorations, photographs are going to stay with us forever," said Alison Griffin.

The Griffins applied the same philosophy to redecorating their Kingstowne townhouse.

With the help of interior designer Paola McDonald, they dismissed every myth they ever heard about showcasing personal photos in upscale design and made family portraits the focal point.



Alison and Paul Griffin made a point of taking photos of their children as they grew. Designer Paola McDonald helped them incorporate those photos into their decor.



"She said she had all these great pictures but wasn't sure what to do with them," said McDonald. "When I walked in and saw all of these photos it was like eye candy. It's rare you have a client who has so much great art already."

McLean photographer Virginia Payne took all the photos, starting with a maternity session when Alison was pregnant with their first son, Nicholas. After Nicholas was born Payne scheduled photo sessions every three months. Nicholas and younger brother Benjamin

are the subjects in most of the photos. But the Griffins and extended family are pictured in others.

"If it were just snap shots it would have a whole different feel," said Griffin. "But this is art."

The largest collage begins in the play area of the family room and extends up the stairway to a vaulted ceiling above the second floor landing. This collage, a series of baby pictures of the two boys, features more than 10 photos in black frames with beaded borders.

Griffin keeps the design fresh by adding photos and switching out others. "It's a rotating gallery. Every time I visit it's different," McDonald said.

Mixing color photography and black-and-white in the same collage is OK, said McDonald, as long as there is one dominant element to bring them together, such as the frame material or color.

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Virginia Payne Photography virginiapaynephotography.com

Creative Elegance Interiors creative elegance interiors.com

In the basement, Griffin used ornate gold and glacier blue frames. The color scheme is repeated in long sateen window treatments, two large gold Kincaid chairs, silver sage painted walls and a tapestry throw.

McDonald suggests using brown craft paper to trace the backs of the frames to create a blueprint for your collage. Then use painter's tape to mount the shapes on the wall.

"You can design your collage on the wall before you put any nail holes in it," McDonald said. "There are no rules. Play around with it until you come up with an arrangement you like."



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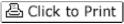
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