



At our house there's

In a cottage with six backpacks, 12 sneakers, and 12 paws, designer



IN THE CASUAL STUDY (opposite) off the master bedroom, Liz pushed two lounge chairs together to create a cushy spot where (from left) Gibson, Frances, and Michael watch television. **ALABAMA ARTIST** Lila Graves painted the children's portraits that hang in the playroom (above), a former garage enclosed during renovation. **THE HOUSE IS MADE** entirely from concrete painted white, both inside and out. The front door, interior doors, and window muntins are accented in a deep charcoal gray.

never a dull moment”

Liz Hand-Woods makes room for it all—including downtime

LINDSEY ELLIS BEATTY WRITER BEATY COLEMAN



here's the story of a Birmingham, Alabama, designer, Liz Hand-Woods, and her husband, Mike, that reads oddly similar to an old television show. (You know, the one where a lady meets a fellow, and they knew that it was much more than a hunch.) When Liz and Mike found each other, she had two children; he had four. "We actually met at the grocery store," Liz says with a laugh. He called that night for a dinner date, and about a year later they married, melded families, and renovated a cottage now home to their six kids—Madelyn, 19, Emily, 18, Gibson, 16, Margeaux, 16, Michael, 13, Frances, 8—and three Labs, Montana, Bowden, and Murphie (28 to 56, in dog years).



Fortunately, Liz's super-stylish cottage doesn't give off a *Brady Bunch* vibe, though it does endure the comings and goings of a large family. No problem for a house where the walls, ceilings, and floors are made entirely of concrete. "I just mop with water," she says. "The floors are indestructible and really don't show dirt—they always look clean." And everything, inside and out, got a coat of white paint. "I wanted something fresher than what I'd lived in before," says Liz, who broke away from the darker neutrals, deep browns, and moody greens she'd used for years. "It gets so much light, I felt like this house wanted to be white."

Liz mixes up her serene palette by layering unlikely textures. "I'll use a sleek,



IN THE LIVING ROOM, Liz mixes contemporary and traditional. The modern glass-topped coffee table (top left) sits next to a “peel-y painted” console, and a contemporary painting over the fireplace balances a collection of antique drawings. AN OLD OCCASIONAL CHAIR (left) got re-covered in white leather—an unlikely combo. “It makes it look a little newer and more sophisticated,” says Liz. “And the durability of leather is an added benefit.” The front door is a custom design by architects Paul Bates and Jeremy Corkern. A similar pattern appears in the kitchen window shown on page 92. A PAIR OF UPHOLSTERED LINEN CHAIRS get a touch of glam with satin throw pillows. “In an instant you can go from very dressy to very casual just by pairing different textures,” says Liz. The plush white cowskin rug is a soft contrast to the concrete pavers.



THE PLAYROOM INVITES a kick-up-your-feet attitude, making it a favorite place for movies and popcorn. “I CAN’T BELIEVE IT, but somehow it all fits,” says Liz of her tiny 9- by 11-foot galley kitchen with two sinks, dishwasher, refrigerator, industrial-style range, even a spice drawer. The cabinets are treated with a lime wash—a nice alternative to paint. “BEFORE THE RENOVATION, the house lacked a sense of order,” says architect Paul Bates. “You’d kind of wind from room to room.” He and fellow architect Jeremy Corkern suggested lining up the room openings for better views. Now you can see from the kitchen, through the dining room and living room, into the study.

contemporary piece but pair it with a crusty antique to keep it from feeling flat,” she explains. In the living room, she went for extreme contrast by covering an antique chair in modern white leather, as well as by giving two linen upholstered chairs a hint of glamour with satin throw pillows. “They instantly brought the level of the room up,” she says.

An ingenious layout—adults on the right, kids on the left, family in the middle—presented itself during the planning process. “I love that we can be completely separate and still all be here at the same time,” says Liz. She and Mike enjoy the addition of a private master bedroom, bath, and closet designed by architects Paul Bates and Jeremy Corkern. “It was really a function of working with what existed,” says Paul. “We had only one spot where we could add on, so the house determined the floor plan.” And the lot allowed it.

On their side, the kids have run of the former garage, which was enclosed and converted into a playroom during the renovation. Upstairs, everyone gets his or her own personal space, though sharing rooms is a reality for many big



“This is where
it all happens,
from pizza night
to homework”





“This is our retreat,” says Liz. “We watch the news, read, and just get away from it all”



IN THE MASTER BEDROOM, walls of windows connect the interiors to nature. “I used lots of blues and greens here to reflect the outdoors,” says Liz. Though the palette is light and airy, it’s full of texture: A ribbed linen and cotton area rug covers the hardwood floor, and quilted bedding is offset with silk throw pillows and layers of linens in various shades of white.

“THIS IS WHERE we read and watch the news,” Liz says of the master suite. “Sometimes we bring out the TV trays and eat dinner in here—it’s our retreat.” When there’s a full moon, the tub (above) is the place to be. “Moonlight floods in,” she says.

families, not just the Bradys. “The kids have always gotten along,” says Liz. “So they’ve never minded.”

At the end of the day, lady and fellow, girls and boys, come together in the middle of the house, around the dining table. “We don’t have a big formal dining room,” she says. “We eat right here every night.” Sometimes, though, after her homemade pizza (a family favorite) is gobbled up, the commotion dies down, and homework starts, she and Mike slip off to the “adult quarters” to eat dinner from trays, enjoying the peace and quiet that their cottage is designed so perfectly to accommodate.

Now, if only they had an Alice.



madelyn & emily

The oldest girls wanted something stylish, so Liz created the “tented” twin beds. U-shaped rods mounted to the ceiling over the low beds hold the fabric that adds height to the room.

take it from liz

Follow Liz's lead and encourage your children to express their own style by involving them in choosing fabrics and accessories for their rooms



gibson & michael

"The boys are into hunting," Liz says, "so I let them have their ducks and deer heads. They can show their personality." Camouflage duvet covers complete the look.



margeaux

"We started with the accent pillow in green, which is one of Margeaux's favorite colors," Liz explains. They added more green in the prints above the bed, and hints of chocolate brown.



frances

Liz created the illusion of a four-poster bed with canopy by framing this bed with panels hung from the ceiling. "Frances loves pink," says Liz. "So I just went with it."