

DESIGNING TO *Live*

Decorating for style or for children to play? This young mom and interior designer does both

ASHLEY GILBREATH '04 KNOWS ABOUT LIVING SPACE. The founder and owner of Ashley Gilbreath Interior Design in Montgomery, Ala., has over a decade helping clients craft one-of-a-kind rooms for their homes. As a mother of three small children, she also knows the importance of leaving room for living.

"I have a 9-year-old, a 6-year-old and a 3-year-old, a dog that is still a puppy and a husband that likes to drink red wine," says Gilbreath. "We live in these spaces. I try to make sure that not only does everything look good, but it lives and functions well."

The 2019 recipient of the coveted Shutze Award from the Institute of Classical Art & Architecture, Gilbreath started in Auburn's nationally ranked Department of Interior Design and at a design firm in New York City before moving to Atlanta to be closer to her fiancé, Barrett Gilbreath '04. The two married and relocated to Montgomery where, encouraged by Barrett, she opened her own design firm in 2005. Since then, she

has worked across the country designing custom-curated spaces for a variety of homes and running the Parish Shoppe, her Montgomery-based home goods store.

"When it's time to bring the sofa and the rug and the chairs and the tables, you still need the little stuff — the coffee-table books, the accessories, the small bowls and those kinds of things," she said. "There wasn't a place locally that had what we were looking for, so we did it ourselves."

In 2017, HGTV approached her about shooting a potential reality show called "Sweet Home Renovation." Despite the show's pilot earning positive reviews, Gilbreath was hesitant to sign the five-year contract the studio asked for. For now, she is focusing on running her design business, keeping the Parish Shoppe stocked and planning for whatever in life happens next.

"Maybe another day, when my babies are good, grown and gone, we can do it again. But today, I want to enjoy playing mom for a little bit."

ASHLEY GILBREATH TALKS INTERIOR DESIGN

KNOW YOUR *Budget*

"If your budget is \$100,000, we can knock it all out [at once], or we'll say, 'Let's get through these three rooms, and then in a year we'll knock out the next three.'"

STICK TO THE *"Program"* (OF YOUR LIFE)

"If it were for me and my house, whatever we're picking out needs to have something that we can take off and wash easily and often. We need an ottoman rather than a coffee table, because the ottoman in our house becomes a stage, an extra seat, the dance floor. It's multipurpose."

STAY *Timeless*

"I love old pieces because in my mind, it shows a sense of history and a sense of the past. Also, my kids can't kill it any more than it already has been."

NO *Halfway* DESIGN

"If you only buy three pieces this year and wait to buy three more, I joke with clients it's like going to the prom with half of your gym clothes still on."

KEEP *Color* IN Control

"Color needs to be in smaller amounts with a very clean, crisp background so that it actually pops. As silly as it sounds, if the cover of a book has got a good color on it, grab it. That's your impactful stuff."

AVOID A TACKY *Auburn Room*

"You don't want to walk into a space and feel 'overwhelmed by Auburn.' I think pulling in a blue-and-orange check pillow, or a series of antique eagle prints, would work great. You have to tailor it just a little bit and I think it will be fine."

AVOID A TACKY *Auburn Room*

Regardless of school spirit, restraint is key.

Stick TO THE *"Program"*

Planning interiors based on the expected (or unexpected) is both smart and practical.

STAY *Timeless*

Small items like pillows can be replaced easily, but a sofa is a bigger commitment; pick items that will age well and will not fall out of fashion.

KEEP *Color* IN Control

Let a room's color exist in the details, not the big things — the contrasts will stand out more.

KNOW YOUR *Budget*

Itemize each piece down to the smallest accessory when creating a budget to prioritize the room's needs.

NO *Halfway* DESIGN

Redesigning a room requires a budget that can see it through to completion; otherwise it looks worse than before.