



In the foyer, a cheerful yellow ceramic sculpture by Eric Nichols and a massive bust the Corbins purchased at the Art Institute holiday auction lead to a bronze Chronos sculpture by Tom that's displayed at the entrance to the courtyard.

# Artist *in* Residence

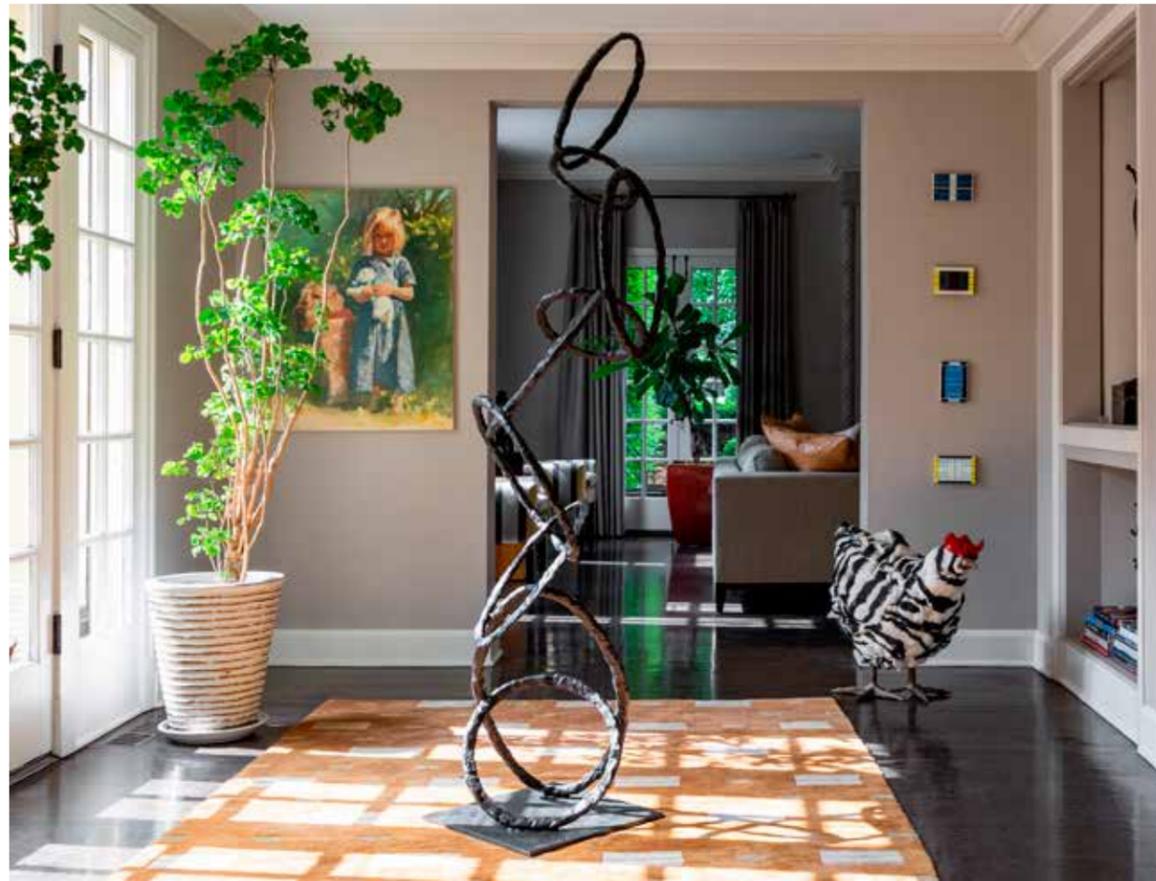
FOR TOM AND SUSIE CORBIN, A COUNTRY CLUB DISTRICT MEDITERRANEAN SERVES AS AN EVER-EVOLVING PERSONAL GALLERY SPACE

CONTRIBUTING WRITER Patricia O'Dell

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER Aaron Leimkuehler



Tom and Susie Corbin in their living room. The painting of a musician belonged to Tom's parents.



**Above:** The Corbins' standard poodle, Bodie, poses in front of his portrait by Tom. Fresh hydrangea arrangement from Beco Flowers. **Top left:** A small alcove opens to the living room, kitchen, and foyer. **Bottom left:** Two of Tom's sculptures flank a glazed stoneware basket with hare handle by ceramist Ken Ferguson.

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 - Susie Corbin

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**A**fter living in their Country Club District Mediterranean for more than 20 years, Susie and Tom Corbin looked around their almost-empty nest and thought it was time to reimagine their house in a way that would suit their new lifestyle. With their daughter, Ali, who had recently graduated from college happily ensconced in Austin, Texas, they could hit refresh. “We used to have big parties and kids in our basement. Now we entertain, but it looks a lot different,” says Susie.

This is the second time the couple updated the house. When they moved in they did the

sorts of things many new homeowners do: strip wallpaper, paint, refinish floors, raise a child.

At that time Tom had left advertising to pursue his sculpting career full time. Images of starving artists aside, he says the shift was not as unnerving as it sounds.

“It was a pretty pragmatic decision,” he says. “I was already creating and selling. I thought it would work out.”

Tom was right. His work is promoted in 22 showrooms and galleries internationally, featured on movie sets and in celebrity homes. He's often the first choice for commercial projects as well, including commis-



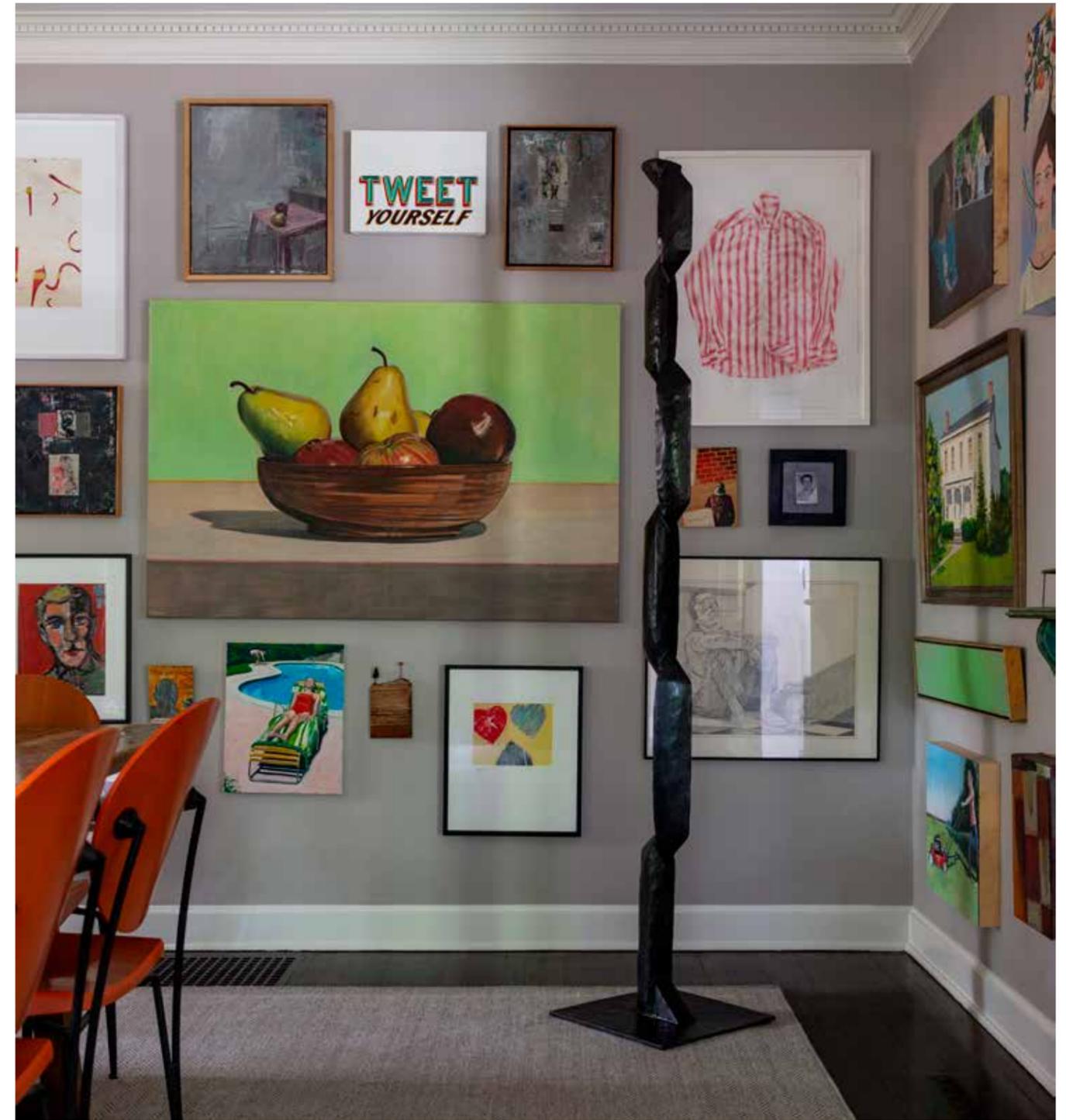
Dakota Jackson chairs surround an antique farm table in the dining room. Succulent arrangement on the table is from Beco Flowers. The painting is by Wilbur Niewald.

sions for the United Nations, the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and Kansas City's Firefighters Memorial.

The Corbins' presence in the Kansas City art community has led to an extensive personal collection that features many local artists, from well-known established painters such as Wilbur

Niewald, Jane Voorhees, Keith Jacobshagen, Archie Scott Gobber, and ceramist Ken Ferguson, to numerous works that they have purchased at local galleries, the Kansas City Art Institute, and The Friends' of Artists Coalition.

Their original strategy for showcasing their collection was clean, white walls. But they began



to feel that white walls were not necessary to show the art properly. They were ready for some color.

In addition, the couple was ready for a more modern aesthetic, which drew them to interior designer Lisa Schmitz.

Together they decided to paint the downstairs a soothing gray. Schmitz eliminated the traditional

mantel in the living room and had a clean blue-stone surround installed in its place. A neutral rug grounds the room, while the crisp, clean-lined sofa and chairs provide both comfort and style. A serene Jacobshagen painting hangs over the fireplace, which frames one of Tom's *Walking Girl* sculptures.

As sophisticated and serene as the room is, the

Paintings by artists, including Jules Olitski, Jeff Robinson and Archie Scott Gobber, join several paintings by Tom on the dining room gallery walls.



In the kitchen, the Calacatta Gold marble countertop on the island butts up to a butcher-block top constructed from the wood countertops used in the previous kitchen. The light fixtures hanging above the island and in the butler's pantry (above) were hand-blown glass sculptures the couple found on a California trip and had wired.

couple also decided to take advantage of this gracious space and put in a television.

"We love being in here," says Susie. "We didn't want to save this room for special occasions. We really wanted to use it."

The dining room's gallery wall is a who's who of the Kansas City art community and echoes the smart and lively conversations that happen around the table.

"This wall tells the story of where we've been," says Tom of both relationships built and trips taken. "And, of course, there's always Ali," he notes of his daughter who has been a regular model for him since she was a child.

The spare, linear dining room table was a serendipitous find.

"We'd had square table in here and it just seemed too big. People were so far away. We wanted something narrow to bring everyone



**Left:** Pillows from Golden & Pine top the upholstered bed in the master bedroom. The flower arrangement by Beco Flowers captures the colors from the painting by Laurel Hughes. **Above:** In the master bathroom, two paintings by Tom, one reflected in the pivoting mirror, are of their daughter and a friend.

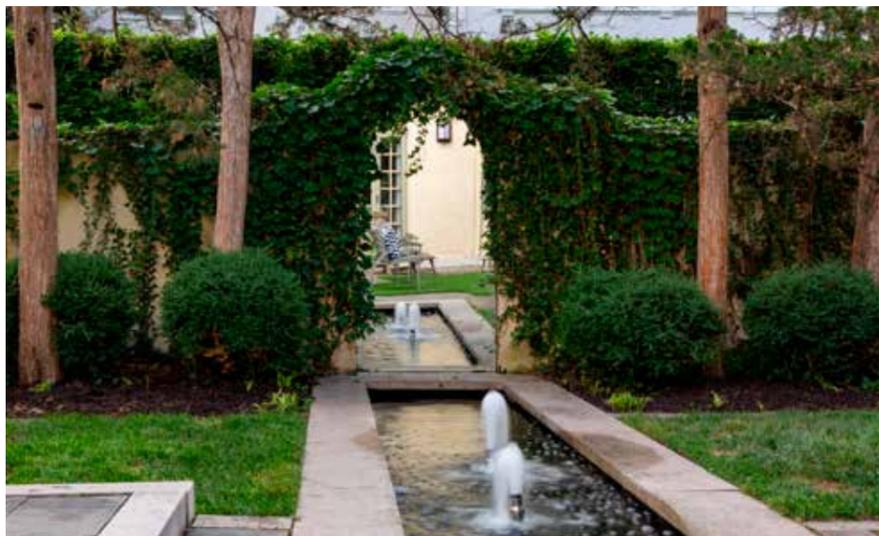
closer. We ran into Rick Brehm and said, “We really want something like that table you used to have at Lulamac,” says Susie of the now Hudson and Jane owner of his previous—and pioneering—shop in the Crossroads.

“We were so lucky!” she says. “He still had it!”

Rather than a refresh, the kitchen received a complete update with new cabinets, countertops, and appliances. A large butcher block creates a wonderful surface to prep and prepare, while the thick, marble-topped island is an easy spot for informal dining.

Upstairs, in the private areas of the house, the master bedroom and bath were reimagined as well. The Corbins’ bedroom is a cozy, yet spare, cocoon with windows that are easily hidden with a wall of curtains. An upholstered

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bed and linear loveseat keep surfaces soft.

Schmitz took every advantage of the space when reimagining the master bath. It was difficult to work around the windows over the long counter and no one wanted to lose the light.

“So the mirrors pivot,” says Susie. “It was such a clever idea!”

The Corbins did not stop reimagining the house within its walls. Their gracious garden, which is hidden from the street by dense mature trees, received a new bluestone patio, a fountain and iron fence with the help of designer Patrick Kappelmann.

The renovation seems far from daunting. In fact, the Corbins are energized. It turns out their empty nest holds very full lives. ○

### THE IT LIST

#### Interior Design

Lisa Schmitz Interior Design  
lischmitzinteriordesign.com

#### Flowers

Beco Flowers  
becoflowers.com

#### Garden Design

Arcadian Design  
816-645-9591

**Opposite, top:** For the “grass” rug in the courtyard, Susie purchased a rectangle of faux grass online, then cut it into a free-form shape. **Opposite, middle:** The path to the front door. Look carefully and you can see Tom’s tall “Walking Girl” sculpture peeking over the hedge. **Opposite, below:** A mirror surrounded by vines reflects the fountain and enlarges the space.