



Street view of Jon Green's restored Creole house in the French Quarter.

Best sources for research on historic buildings in the French Quarter:
Vieux Carré Commission, 334 Royal St. New Orleans, LA 70130
www.cityofno.com/pg-59-1-vieux-carr%C3%A9-commission-home.aspx
The Historic New Orleans Collection- Williams Research Center
410 Chartres Street, New Orleans, LA 70130 www.hnoc.org
Notarial Archives Research Center 1340 Poydras Street,
Suite 360 New Orleans, LA 70112 www.notarialarchives.org
Historic Architecture and Interior Design
Charles A. Berg, AIA, NCARB www.charlesberg.com

THE OWL'S NEST

BY MELISSA JACOBS

Imagine a place where cogent tranquility rules. Here, a gold alligator adoringly eyes a teal sea of velvet in the midst of pacific savages. Horse drawn carriages clomp, riverboats meander and laughter filters the courtyard. It could be only one place— Jon Green's newly restored weekend retreat in Vieux Carre'. After a hunt which had extended into "years" and with French Quarter residential properties in short supply, Green purchased the early Creole cottage sight-unseen in 2008 from noted French Quarter landlord and architect Leon Impastato. "It never came on the market. I ran straight ahead and put in a contract," said Green. "I knew it was right."

The house, classically built parallel to the street with a gabled roof was proportioned with two rooms on each side, a courtyard and slave quarters with a kitchen below. "We have property deeds from the 1700's. The house was built sometime between 1810 and 1820," said Green. "I wanted it to be restored properly." No simple task as the entire French Quarter district is a National Historic Landmark. So although Green was no novice to restoration, (he has brought to life such properties as an abandoned stone Edwardian in West Virginia), nevertheless his first step was to enlist transplanted Houstonian now New Orleans resident and historic architect Chuck Berg.

"Our objective was to give sight lines to the garden by opening up the house to the courtyard and moving the kitchen from the quarters behind the courtyard into the main house," said Berg. What emerged from the collaboration was a two-story guest house behind the courtyard and a main house with two bedrooms, two bathrooms, living and dining room with a newly imagined kitchen which reads "dressy French bistro" punctuated with deep burgundy cabinetry, white Carrara marble and a Pierre Bonnard original.

"Jon's rooms are not shy," said Berg. "They're bold and atmospheric while being tranquil." For color, Green wanted to remain pure to the limited Creole colors of the time, marrying in his words, the "odd" pairing of "misty French Quarter gray" and "butter yellow" as the backdrop for the strategically acquired antiques such as the William and Mary chest in the dining area. The remaining furniture pieces were designed by Green and built by partner David Longwood's workshop, (i.e. Designers Furniture Manufacturers) including the sofa, beds and silk velvet triangle ottomans. Sophisticated color bursts such as the red and green demi-lamp shades custom made by Houstonian Julie Stander feed historic purity while the black and white zig zag roman shades in the guestroom gently nudge into "now" remind visitors this home cottage is clearly 21st century.

An owl seen sitting on the roof ridge their first night in the house prompted its' name: "The Owl's Nest," a befitting welcome for a home once owned by wildlife artist John James Audubon. He used it as a studio in the 1820's so it was only natural for his famous birds and mammals to find habitat on the walls, bedding, mantle and even backsplash in the Green-Longwood domicile all harmoniously juxtaposed to de Gournay wallpaper panels in what has become a Jon Green's hallmark.

And while Bourbon street life may be known for tourists and hurricanes (the beverage), the lower Quarter is all residential with life punctuated by walking — the occasional celebrity sighting (Helen Mirren, Lenny Kravitz, Nicholas Cage and Brad and Angelina are neighbors) — and spending time in what has become Jon Green's favorite "room" in the house. "The courtyard is what living in New Orleans is all about," said Green. It's here the weekend begins and ends and a modern day party comes to life. ❖

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES FARMER.

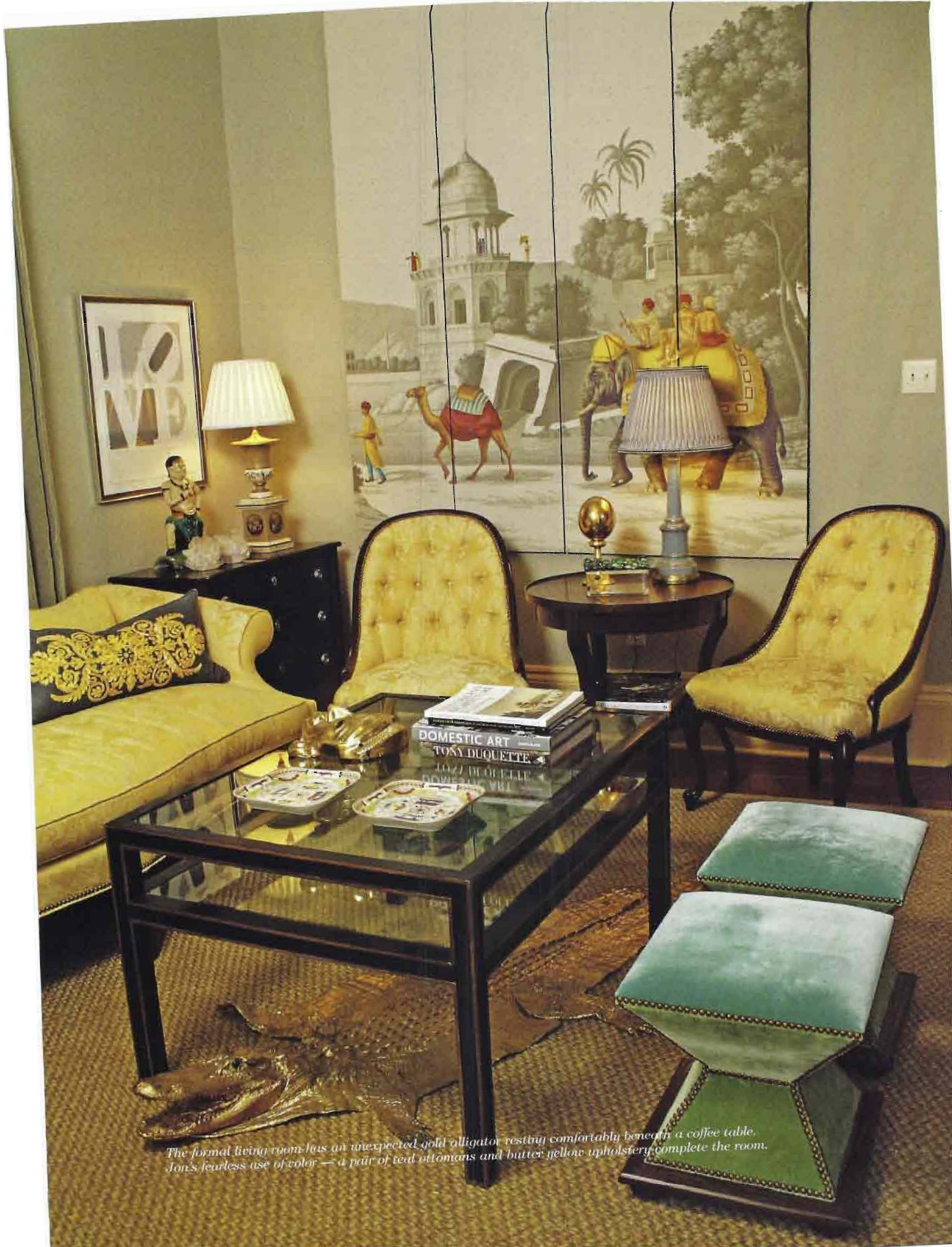
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Bold burgundy cabinets, Carrara marble counters and antique accessories (the painting purchased from Amy Perlin) create an eclectic warm kitchen/dining area.



Another wall in Jon's kitchen displays his collection of antique plates. A colorful still-life painting balances the arrangement above the old mantle.



The formal living room has an unexpected gold alligator resting comfortably beneath a coffee table. Jon's fearless use of color — a pair of teal ottomans and butter yellow upholstery — complete the room.