



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT—Neighbor Sophie isn't about to miss Ashley's May Day celebration, announced on a charming vintage chalk easel. Gerbera daisies set the mood for a spring fling. OPPOSITE: After Ashley reupholstered the vintage slipper chairs (snagged at a yard sale), "I liked the fabric so much I bought a coordinated pair of stiletto heels!"



A playful mix of folk art and sparkly swag, this Southern designer's home is the ultimate May Day party pad

# THE GURU



# OF GLITTER

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LEFT: Hand-blown Murano glass pinwheel sconces create a festive vibe in the family room. ABOVE: Ashley with "my very foxy husband," Graham Fry, Ashley's creations, including a Good n' Plenty Fairy Crown, BELOW, couldn't be more different from the folk and found object art she enjoys, including this painting by Tom d., BOTTOM RIGHT, "I tend to collect things I personally can't create."

## WALK

WALKING THROUGH HER RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA, NEIGHBORHOOD six years ago, Ashley Carter saw a drab green fixer-upper, so tilted that it looked like a haunted house.

Having previously restored a battered bungalow to cream puff status, she was no stranger to makeovers. Always up for a challenge, she and her husband, Graham, sold their perfect pad, bought the tilted terror, and lived in one room for two years while they gutted and renovated the rest of the house, building an addition off the back and adding a master bath. "I cried a lot during the first six months," she recalls.

But decorating the place was easy, because Ashley designs for Goldbug Studio, her limited-edition gift line inspired by fairy tales and folklore.



In the guest room, where cat Sydney (aka "the Neighborhood Ambassador") rules the roost, a fireplace mantel stands in as a headboard. A toile-and-parchment ballerina dress form made by artist Kim Perry displays Goldbug wares.







OPPOSITE: Ashley, who co-designed the master bath with her architect, drew inspiration for the walls from an old blue-green apothecary bottle. The tub, original to the house, was re-pearlained. ABOVE: She keeps a stash of bath salts handy for luxuriant soaks. "The tub is my domain. Graham's only allowed in if he's running a triple-digit fever." BELOW: An antique bisque seashell baby, an eBay find, was a souvenir from a French coastal town.



RIGHT: Blue Luna Bella, part of Goldbug Studio's Bella series, holds a parasol drenched in glitter. Ashley scanned her face and torso from a 1910 book of fairy tales, and fashioned her skirt from vintage wallpaper. An Italian soap dish, INSET, adorns a waxed pine chest, BELOW, one of two that were modified into his-and-hers vanities.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Some of Ashley's trinkets and treasures eventually top the character pieces she creates for Goldbug, but Ursula, a one-of-a-kind sculpture by local artist Edith Graves, "isn't going anywhere." Goldbug's "slightly self-absorbed" gift tags (such as "Gimmeal!" and "I am Queen!") add a dollop of diva to wrap jobs. A bisque ballerina pirouettes gracefully. A '40s paper doll inspired Ashley's latest bodacious Belle, the Cherry Teapot Queen. Watchful cups sport random sayings. A carnival lady-half doll sits atop an antique toy accordion that actually plays. A bowl from a student craft exhibition holds a pottery pear from Ashley's sister. OPPOSITE: The narrow kitchen's bow-front cabinetry invokes a '20s galley style. A found object tin fish above the vintage settee sports coffee-can fins.





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ABOVE LEFT: Ashley knows what makes a fabulous party—fairy wings and gigantic Rice Krispie Treats. Thanks to Graham, “the yard looked as green as the Irish countryside,” Ashley says. ABOVE: Graham, who owns Winding Path Landscaping Company, used rounded river rock for the porch and walkway. It lends the exterior a farmhouse feel and was an alternative to local (and more rare) quartz fieldstone. LEFT: Miniature party hat place card holders dolled up with vintage tinsel.



THOUGH SHE CONSIDERS HERSELF “A STRAIGHT SHOOTER—A BLUE JEANS AND T-SHIRT KIND of girl,” Ashley suspects her ultra-feminine Goldbug pieces bring her latent “girly-itis” to the surface. At her studio several miles from home, there is no shortage of gilded garniture. “I’m addicted to sparkle,” she says. “I like things that evoke a childlike mood.”

The yin to her glittery yang is the earthy folk art she collects. “I adore outsider art—whacky, unconventional pieces made with found objects and junk.” Highly selective, she’s a stickler for vibrant color and shape. And, as with her own creations, a sense of humor is a must. Perhaps that’s why, in her quirky universe, a flying fish with coffee-can fins, a cherry coquette, and a furry love machine of a cat can coexist happily.

With her fanciful eye and childlike sense of wonder, who better than Ashley to host a neighborhood May Day soiree?



BELOW: Catherine, Sophie, and the gang "were enchanted by the party—when they weren't whacking each other with the May poles," Ashley says with a laugh.



ABOVE: Butterfly shortbread led to the hill. ABOVE RIGHT: Roses sweeten a trolleytop. The Queen of Confection, RIGHT, sits atop a cloud of bambinos. Available in bland and brunette, she's the ultimate trio of cake topper and makes a lovely party hat. BELOW RIGHT: Ashley her man: Pat (in green), and neighbor Leigh Anne sport May Day crowns. BELOW LEFT: Guests Sophie, Catherine, and Mason stir the birdbath soup. 🍷



the grilling the food. (© amy colman)

