

# Master Bedroom Deck Retreat



by **Shanon Munn**

The 2012 Washington, DC Design House ([www.DCDesignHouse.com](http://www.DCDesignHouse.com)) benefiting Children's National Medical Center focused on a home in the Spring Valley neighborhood of the city. The house was built in 1957 and was on a narrow, corner lot.

Many of the designers in the home used exterior elements in the interior. One of spaces with the biggest make-over potential was the long, narrow deck just off the upstairs master suite that overlooks the private backyard.

This space is a relaxing, private oasis where the homeowners can come with a newspaper to spend a leisurely morning or take an afternoon siesta. We selected loungey, interior styled furniture to help make the deck an extension of the interior. The custom metal brackets hold the outdoor sheer that creates a draped cover, making the exposed space feel more intimate and allowing a little comfort from the sun.

The long, thin dimensions of the deck created a space-planning puzzle. We chose to use a few larger pieces rather than many small pieces. This helps to

reinforce the indoor/outdoor feel of the space. An additional challenge was working with the existing railings. We turned this negative into a positive by creating a long "feature wall" of cleverly placed pedestals and benches to hide the buttresses and metal ornamentation.

We wanted to utilize products that are not typically associated with exterior spaces. The art panels act like wallpaper across the side of the house and exterior rugs cover the decking. And interior-styled lighting fixtures are used instead of the typical outdoor wall sconces.

## Small Space Solutions

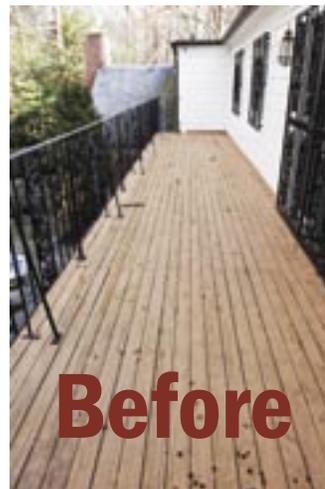
We wanted to have our space feel like an extension of the indoors. We had to update the metal railings so the custom pedestals and benches were our way of updating the look without removing or

altering them (this is a pretty common issue in this traditional and historic area).

The outdoor sheer fabric is hung off of custom wall brackets and helps to give a sense of intimacy and the draped ends soften the harsh exterior walls.

The indoor/outdoor rugs were also very important in helping create this sense of visual warmth.

The biggest challenge of this deck was the size. We didn't want to fill the deck with small, uncomfortable pieces, which is what often happens with decks this narrow. The sectional and swing chair are large, comfy pieces of furniture that were intentionally chosen to fill the space and for comfort.



## Railing Pedestals

One of the largest issues that I was facing was working with the existing metal railing. In order to soften and update

the look, I designed the system of pedestals and benches to create a feature-wall out of the problem. The pedestals help to create height and interest in the long, monotonous run of railing. I designed the pedestals to straddle the railing at each of the locations where the angled buttress supports are located. The benches go in-between the pedestals and act as display space and extra seating.

### Overhead Canopy

Another primary challenge was dealing with the exposed, cold feeling that the deck had before we redesigned it. The narrow dimensions of the deck (about 6'6"x40') made locating umbrellas impossible and the temporary nature of this project restricted installing a retractable shade or pergola. The patterned indoor/outdoor rugs help this greatly, but the sheer canopy and brackets were essential. This provides a minimal amount of protection from water

and weather, while also creating the secure feeling of a "roof." I designed the brackets to be extremely light and they were installed for easy removal. The sheer indoor/outdoor fabric (Sunbrella from Glen-Raven) was sewn on-site and slips on and off easily. This would be necessary for seasonal removal in a permanent installation.

### Outdoor Artwork

Because I am primarily an interior designer, I treated this space just as I would an indoor room. I knew that the feature wall would be visually very strong and that there needed to be an equally strong element on the house wall to create a feeling of visual balance. I wanted to bring indoor elements outside and I found the lack of available outdoor artwork and mirrors to be a

bit disheartening so I custom-designed these elements. The photographs used for the artwork were taken in a private garden off of Embassy Road that I was



invited to visit. I had them printed on a new kind of plastic film that was recommended by the printing studio. It is fade-resistant and water-resistant, so it is perfect for this outdoor application.

The mirrors on either end were custom-made out of airplane-grade aluminum, we used safety plexi mirror on the back so that there would be no danger of cracked glass. ✂

Shanon Munn, ASID, is Principal of Ambi Design Studio Inc. She can be reached at 703.597.8401 or [www.ambidesignstudio.com](http://www.ambidesignstudio.com). You can also follow her blog at: <http://ambidesign-theblog.blogspot.com>.

