

R

Rosanna Hardin Hall, an accomplished plein air painter, doesn't know how she got to be such a dreamer. "I grew up with an incredibly overachiever type of family," she says. Her grandfather, John H. Toy, started Rex Health and Accident Insurance Company in Indianapolis. Her father, William S. Hall, was a prominent attorney who helped establish some of Indiana's healthcare laws. And her mother, Christine, took over the family business. "She was the first female president of an insurance company in the United States," Hall says. "I wasn't gung-ho on being a president."

Instead, Hall became a journalist and an artist and left home in pursuit of both disciplines. Early on she worked for *The Washington Star*, now defunct, and was married for a short time to Robert D. Novak, a well-known columnist for *The Washington Post*. She went to Paris and studied oil painting, returned to Indy and wrote for *The Indianapolis News*, earned an art degree from Herron, and moved again for newspaper jobs in Santa Fe and then Honolulu. There, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, she gave in to her love for art and concentrated on painting full-time.

And then Hall came home, to the Queen Anne in Woodruff Place that has been in the family since 1915 and is still known in Woodruff as the Toy House. As a child, she lived on the second floor with her parents and sister while her grandmother occupied one of the home's apartments. Back then, Woodruff



A STEP UP

Renovations included raising the floor in the attic's tower so Hall can see outside to paint. "It's like living in a treehouse," she says.

A LITTLE ITALY

Pink geraniums are the only colorful blooms in Hall's backyard (opposite page), reflecting her painting sessions in Italy. "It's my idea of a Renaissance garden, which doesn't need a lot of flowers," she says.



Rosanna Hardin Hall, an accomplished plein air painter, doesn't know how she got to be such a dreamer. "I grew up with an incredibly overachiever type of family," she says. Her grandfather, John H. Toy, started Rex Health and Accident Insurance Company in Indianapolis. Her father, William S. Hall, was a prominent attorney who helped establish some of Indiana's healthcare laws. And her mother, Christine, took over the family business. "She was the first female president of an insurance company in the United States," Hall says. "I wasn't gung-ho on being a president."

Instead, Hall became a journalist and an artist and left home in pursuit of both disciplines. Early on she worked for *The Washington Star*, now defunct, and was married for a short time to Robert D. Novak, a well-known columnist for *The Washington Post*. She went to Paris and studied oil painting, returned to Indy and wrote for *The Indianapolis News*, earned an art degree from Herron, and moved again for newspaper jobs in Santa Fe and then Honolulu. There, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, she gave in to her love for art and concentrated on painting full-time.

And then Hall came home, to the Queen Anne in Woodruff Place that has been in the family since 1915 and is still known in Woodruff as the Toy House. As a child, she lived on the second floor with her parents and sister while her grandmother occupied one of the home's apartments. Back then, Woodruff



NOW AND THEN

Decorated with family heirlooms (opposite page) and her own artwork (this page), Hall's home now speaks to where she's from and where she's been.



Place, located on the east edge of downtown, was incorporated as its own tiny burg, a charming enclave of Victorian homes along broad streets divided by grassy esplanades. Hall's mother was head of the civic association when the city annexed Woodruff Place with plans to alter the area's feel. "Every day, my mother pleaded with them not to take out the esplanades, old lamps, statues and fountains," Hall says. The effort worked—Hall returned to find Woodruff as soulful as ever. "If anything, it's gotten better," she says.

Hall chose to live in the home's spacious attic, full of dusty furniture, trunks of clothing and treasures that had created a fantasy playland for her and her sister when they were kids. ("The attic was a great place," Hall recalls. "We'd put on my grandmother's lace dresses and parade around the neighborhood.") For a few years, she lived with the clutter. When she got around to shaping up the space, she aimed to make it somewhat of a gallery of family memories by incorporating the huge cache of heirlooms—a spirit that recalls her mother's penchant for preservation. (In addition to saving Woodruff Place's charm, Christine acquired ironwork from the bygone English Hotel on Monument Circle and incorporated them into the house before architectural salvage was hip. The elevator she obtained to use as a gazebo was stolen. "If you ever see a gazebo with old iron scroll work, let me know," Hall says.)

The attic's odd spaces posed a decorating challenge for Hall. Plus, she says, "artists don't really know how to design." So she hired interior designer Kim Conrad to help make a home out of the bundle of inherited furniture and her own artwork. Each effort was a collaboration between the two, and the result is an intersection of Conrad's command of space and Hall's creative eye.

For the kitchen and adjacent sitting area, Kim suggested a Hawaii theme to commemorate the years Hall spent writing and studying in Honolulu. Her Gauguin-inspired landscapes from that time set the tone. A toucan panel, conceived in Honolulu's Paradise Park, is the basis for the area's color scheme, and Conrad found high-end fabrics from Duralee and Pindler & Pindler to match: Delicate conch-shell pinks and leafy greens set off the white wicker seating upholstered in a coral-and-green tropical motif. Bamboo-patterned wallpaper crawls up the slanted kitchen ceiling. A built-in cabinet with glass doors shows off a collection of her grandmother's china, which continues to enjoy regular use.

Subtle tricks help open up tight corners: a wall of mirrors in the guest room, a half-wall between the kitchen and dining area, open areas that transition rather than separate rooms, and plenty of storage provided by built-ins and antique pie safes. Knocking out a wall in the studio changed a tight, dim corner into a light-filled space, where well-worn Oriental rugs cover the floor and an eclectic collection of chairs and tables hold a scattering of half-finished projects. Even here, valued family furnishings are evident. Hall turns over a simple wooden chair with a horsehair seat. The yellowed legend on the bottom indicates that the piece traveled from Virginia to Kentucky—near the time of the Revolutionary War.



"It's certainly cozy," Hall muses, looking at walls crowded with photos and paintings. "There's no blank space." Indeed, only the attic's angled walls are bare of artwork. In her bedroom, above the same bed she used to sleep in when she visited her grandmother ages ago, a dozen or so small paintings she made of her family's Kentucky farm hang alongside paintings she created while in art school: renderings of the Queen Anne home and scenes from a New Orleans garden. A formal portrait of Hall at 10 with her mother and sister hangs above a bookshelf. In the living room and hallway, the art is reminiscent of a private collection. There's a Wayman Adams portrait of Hall's grandfather and furnishings from the family's Lexington farm, which were gifted to the Madison County (Kentucky) Historical Society (and later returned).

Despite the wall-to-wall density, Hall's living space doesn't feel cramped. "Kim guided me in the right way. There's a lot of furniture but still a feeling of space," she says. And a sense of warmth created by the blending of her family heritage and her own artistic life. "Everything seems to go together and I really don't know why," she says. Whatever the reason, the result is as soothing as the train whistles Hall hears in the distance at night, the same sound she heard growing up in Woodruff Place. "I'm the last one here, but I don't feel sad," she says. "With all the furniture in the house, I still have my roots. I was able to come home again." ■

“It’s certainly cozy,” Hall muses, looking at walls crowded with photos and paintings. “There’s no blank space.” Indeed, only the attic’s angled walls are bare of artwork. In her bedroom, above the same bed she used to sleep in when she visited her grandmother ages ago, a dozen or so small paintings she made of her family’s Kentucky farm hang alongside paintings she created while in art school: renderings of the Queen Anne home and scenes from a New Orleans garden. A formal portrait of Hall at 10 with her mother and sister hangs above a bookshelf. In the living room and hallway, the art is reminiscent of a private collection. There’s a Wayman Adams portrait of Hall’s grandfather and furnishings from the family’s Lexington farm, which were gifted to the Madison County (Kentucky) Historical Society (and later returned).

Despite the wall-to-wall density, Hall’s living space doesn’t feel cramped. “Kim guided me in the right way. There’s a lot of furniture but still a feeling of space,” she says. And a sense of warmth created by the blending of her family heritage and her own artistic life. “Everything seems to go together and I really don’t know why,” she says. Whatever the reason, the result is as soothing as the train whistles Hall hears in the distance at night, the same sound she heard growing up in Woodruff Place. “I’m the last one here, but I don’t feel sad,” she says. “With all the furniture in the house, I still have my roots. I was able to come home again.” ■

The attic's odd spaces posed a decorating challenge for Hall. Plus, she says, "artists don't really know how to design." So she hired interior designer Kim Conrad to help make a home out of the bundle of inherited furniture and her own artwork. Each effort was a collaboration between the two, and the result is an intersection of Conrad's command of space and Hall's creative eye.

For the kitchen and adjacent sitting area, Kim suggested a Hawaii theme to commemorate the years Hall spent writing and studying in Honolulu. Her Gauguin-inspired landscapes from that time set the tone. A toucan panel, conceived in Honolulu's Paradise Park, is the basis for the area's color scheme, and Conrad found high-end fabrics from Duralee and Pindler & Pindler to match: Delicate conch-shell pinks and leafy greens set off the white wicker seating upholstered in a coral-and-green tropical motif. Bamboo-patterned wallpaper crawls up the slanted kitchen ceiling. A built-in cabinet with glass doors shows off a collection of her grandmother's china, which continues to enjoy regular use.

Subtle tricks help open up tight corners: a wall of mirrors in the guest room, a half-wall between the kitchen and dining area, open areas that transition rather than separate rooms, and plenty of storage provided by built-ins and antique pie safes. Knocking out a wall in the studio changed a tight, dim corner into a light-filled space, where well-worn Oriental rugs cover the floor and an eclectic collection of chairs and tables hold a scattering of half-finished projects. Even here, valued family furnishings are evident. Hall turns over a simple wooden chair with a horsehair seat. The yellowed legend on the bottom indicates that the piece traveled from Virginia to Kentucky—near the time of the Revolutionary War.

Place, located on the east edge of downtown, was incorporated as its own tiny burg, a charming enclave of Victorian homes along broad streets divided by grassy esplanades. Hall's mother was head of the civic association when the city annexed Woodruff Place with plans to alter the area's feel. "Every day, my mother pleaded with them not to take out the esplanades, old lamps, statues and fountains," Hall says. The effort worked—Hall returned to find Woodruff as soulful as ever. "If anything, it's gotten better," she says.

Hall chose to live in the home's spacious attic, full of dusty furniture, trunks of clothing and treasures that had created a fantasy playland for her and her sister when they were kids. ("The attic was a great place," Hall recalls. "We'd put on my grandmother's lace dresses and parade around the neighborhood.") For a few years, she lived with the clutter. When she got around to shaping up the space, she aimed to make it somewhat of a gallery of family memories by incorporating the huge cache of heirlooms—a spirit that recalls her mother's penchant for preservation. (In addition to saving Woodruff Place's charm, Christine acquired ironwork from the bygone English Hotel on Monument Circle and incorporated them into the house before architectural salvage was hip. The elevator she obtained to use as a gazebo was stolen. "If you ever see a gazebo with old iron scroll work, let me know," Hall says.)

The attic's odd spaces posed a decorating challenge for Hall. Plus, she says, "artists don't really know how to design." So she hired interior designer Kim Conrad to help make a home out of the bundle of inherited furniture and her own artwork. Each effort was a collaboration between the two, and the result is an intersection of Conrad's command of space and Hall's creative eye.