

Be Dazzled! Unique lighting helps set the scene.

by Marimar McNaughton
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Two designers shed light on home interiors, approaching the same subject from radically different angles — one, an antique bargain hunter; the other, a techno wizard.



Louise Gaskill travels from Raleigh to Wilmington, combing antique auctions, stores and flea markets in search of cast-off chandeliers and lamps. She pirates her treasures back to her home studio, where she creates one-of-a-kind lighting fixtures. Gaskill's work finds its way back to the coast, where it resurfaces in private homes in Wrightsville Beach and Wilmington. Her eclectic approach sets the scene for that mix of vintage and contemporary styles often touted as "shabby chic."

At the other end of the spectrum, Jason Walter, a former concert lighting technician, sets the in-home stage with lighting zones, state-of-the-art low-voltage systems controlled with a processor linked to keypads and remotes, both hard wired and wireless, eliminating the need for clunky switch boxes and dimmers. Each scene Walter creates provides a moody tableau for the home, inside and out.

In a typical home with multiple lighting fixtures, Walter, owner of Electronics2You, said it is not uncommon to find more than one multi-switch gang box on the wall in the primary living areas.

Staff photos by Joshua Curry

Louise Gaskill created this elegant living room "bird cage" chandelier for Kathy Babb's home in Forest Hills.

"Nobody knows what light switch does what, and they start hitting buttons," Walter said.

"We get rid of wall clutter. Any combination of these light switches and audio controls can be brought down to one keypad, or a wall-mounted touch-screen system, that controls the audio, the lighting and the shading in any one room, or all of the rooms in the house."

In his own home, he sets the stage with a "good morning" scene.

"It's morning, so you don't want to shock your eyes. My good morning scene brings up my bathroom lights and my bedroom lights slowly," Walter said. "I have a path light going out to my kitchen."

By the time Walter returns from the kitchen, his bedroom lights are starting to ramp up.

"In the bathroom they take a little longer. By the time I get back out into the kitchen, when I get ready to make breakfast, the lights are full blast because my eyes have adjusted," he said.

With first-time clients, he often talks them into lighting the exterior and the main part of the house. First, he sets the scene at sunset, with lights coming on, and sunrise, with lights going off. At night, whether the homeowners drive down the street and into the driveway, or boat up the Intracoastal Waterway and stroll up the dock, they come home to a preset lighted interior. Other popular scenes can be staged for entertaining, adding audio elements and remote-controlled window shades and water fountains, and vacation scenes that record, then mimic the lighting patterns of the homeowners while away.

With a bedside keypad, a dialogue is initiated with the wired system, including "good night" or "lights out" buttons for kids' rooms and a "panic" button.

