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Reclaimed architectural elements introduce layers of rich texture to a new home in Houston, graciously imbuing it with a sense of the Old World.

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Elegant Evenings

An octagonal walnut table extends an invitation to gather in the dining room. Homeowner Sarah West used exterior shutters to frame the windows. "I had originally bought them for the outside, but the scale wasn't quite right," she says. "They work perfectly in here."



Pieces with Pedigree A 17th-century bench from a private chapel in Tuscany provides a resting point (**top left**). The home's exterior mixes Texas limestone and reclaimed French stone (**top right**). During the planning phase, homeowner Sarah West, an architectural consultant, reworked sketches of her Houston home to accommodate items from the South of France, such as the shutters in a sitting area off the kitchen. Vintage oak floors wear a graceful patina thanks to a natural wax finish (**above**). The mantel was salvaged from a horse pasture. "It had to be reconstructed using massive pieces of stone," Sarah says (**opposite**).

HOW DO YOU MAKE A NEW HOME LOOK LIKE AN OLD FRENCH MANOR?

That was a question architectural consultant Sarah West found herself pondering a decade ago when she started working on her first home. Her answer involved incorporating architectural antiques into the bones of a house—into doorways, walls, and floors. Today, after building four of her own homes and serving as a go-between for interior designers and architects on a slew of clients' houses in Houston, Sarah is a pro at finding distinctive pieces with stories to tell. Most often, those stories are delivered with a French accent. "The lifestyle of the French countryside is so romantic," Sarah says. "It's fun to be able to re-create that feeling in a home. I love mixing worn patinas with rustic finishes."

Authenticity is key to Sarah, and to the success of her projects, so after architect Travis Mattingly drew up plans for Sarah's most recent home, she and her husband, Larry, set off for Europe. "We ventured across the South of France looking for treasures," Sarah says. "I found myself falling in love with certain finds and reworking the plans to fit them."

The couple's adventure yielded antique wood floors, shutters, and light fixtures. What she didn't find in Europe, Sarah purchased at her favorite Houston shop, Chateau Domingue, a 15,000-square-foot warehouse filled with reclaimed European building materials.

With its hipped roofline, arched porch openings, shutter-flanked windows, and facade of stone and stucco, the home's overall tone suggests an elegant farmhouse in the French countryside. A barrel-vault ceiling in the foyer sets the tone for the rustic feel of the interior. Reclaimed stone from France wraps around the hallway, gracefully arching over the antique front door. French processional lanterns cast shadows over the







scene in a way that conjures visions of an ancient wine cellar. The kitchen feels reminiscent of a French patisserie with its long marble-topped island, stone countertops, and artful mix of reclaimed cabinetry—some painted, some raw, and some pocked with old nail holes and dressed with rustic hardware.

Plaster walls finished by decorative painter Leslie Sinclair complement the stone throughout the house. “Plaster, even in a neutral color, can have so much depth,” Sarah says. “The subtle texture and color provides the perfect canvas for architectural antiques.”

Beautiful wood, stone, and plaster surfaces serve as the home’s natural palette; colors outside this spectrum are introduced sparingly. For example, Sarah avoids rugs in order to show off the patina of the French oak floors. “I love the warm color of the antique floors and wanted to be able to admire the character of

Gently Aged Sarah flanked an 18th-century French stone farm sink with a pair of reclaimed cabinets to offer modern functionality (*opposite*). The kitchen is anchored by an island crafted from a French linen press and topped with honed white marble. A backsplash of antique Belgian brick complements perimeter countertops made from reclaimed French stone flooring (*above*). A glass-front cupboard showcases Sarah’s collection of creamware and faience pottery (*right*).





Reclaimed Materials vintage terra-cotta tiles support a new porcelain sink in the powder room. A voluminous skirt, made from a linen sheet, adds a feminine touch (*left*). A blanket chest from a small village in France sits at the foot of a guest bed with a headboard fashioned from an old gate (*right*).

the wood,” Sarah says. A wax finish reveals the depth and age of the boards in the best possible light.

Most windows are without dressings, too. But that’s not to say the home is without softness. Where Sarah uses fabric, she chooses antique pieces. Living room love seats are slipcovered in antique French thistle cloth. A reclaimed linen sheet dresses a powder room sink. Everywhere, upholstered pieces feature cinched, flowy skirts, creating a soft touch against hard edges. “When we were in France, I bought all of the fabrics I could find,” Sarah says. “I knew I could figure out how to use them once I got home.”

Sarah’s passion for the real deal even extends to plumbing—she is constantly on the lookout for spouts that she can use, although she admits she has to draw the line at old pipes, which rarely work. For hardware with an aged look, she prefers fixtures with an unlacquered or living finish—unsealed metals that will gain a patina over time.

No detail is too small for Sarah to consider: Every material, every accessory, every finish tells the story of its origin. “My mission is always to make everything as authentic as possible,” she says. ❧

