





History *in the* MAKING

IN THE HEART OF HOUSTON,
A DREAMY NEW-BUILD RESIDENCE
EMITS EUROPEAN ÉLAN WITH ITS
ARCHITECTURAL ANTIQUES
AND STORIED ACQUISITIONS.

TEXT KATE ABNEY
PHOTOGRAPHY MICHAEL HUNTER





Sarah West's business began two decades ago when she designed a house for herself, then another, and then another. "We began selling them, fully furnished, by word of mouth," the designer and architectural consultant says. "Eventually, my husband asked me why I wasn't doing this full time."

Twenty years later, Sarah West & Associates is a Texas mainstay, with projects ranging from far-flung ranches to sophisticated city manses. The Houston talent is known as a tastemaker, liaison, and client advocate who manages install schedules and budgets and helps find architects, builders, and interior designers to fit her clients' unique needs. Still, a few special projects receive her personal attention from start to finish, and a new build in Houston's River Oaks area is one such example.

The clients—passionate philanthropists, avid entertainers, and recent empty nesters who still enjoy frequent visits from their children—had received many recommendations for West before contacting her, so they knew they were in capable hands. However, the decision to incorporate architectural antiques was fresh territory for the couple, and they relied upon West's expertise to guide them. "It was so fun to show them the history of these mantels, chimneys, and doors, and then watch their excitement about incorporating these items into the house," the designer says.

West worked with Houston architect Robert Dame to merge Old-World elements with clean-lined concepts, creating a blank canvas for the architectural antiques she layered on top. Starting



Previous pages: "During a party, you have a place for people to stop with a cocktail and visit with each other in a more intimate setting, but they can also mill around and transition to other seating areas," says West of the great room. These pages, opposite: The foyer features an antique altar table that includes a 19th-century stone cross from a chapel in France. This page, clockwise from top left: The exterior gives the appearance of a centuries-old estate. Down the front hallway, the wine cellar is framed by a 17th-century stone surround. Upstairs, the airy library doubles as a workspace.







Opposite: This is a house tailor-made for hosting gatherings, which is fitting since the owners learned about West via cocktail-party chatter. A view from above the great room reveals the entertaining-friendly seating groups. Above: West had her heart set on the antique *bassin carré* fountain for the front courtyard, which was also constructed with entertaining in mind. Crowning the curved archways over the French doors, a trio of deep-set windows punctuates the soft stucco of the home's exterior.





This view of the dining room reveals how the plaster walls of the home extend all the way to the floor. The absence of trim established a blank canvas for architectural antiques, such as the 10-foot-high, bifold shutters that West had integrated into the wall as storage. The immense crystal chandelier from Genoa, Italy, illuminates eight Louis XV dining chairs upholstered in robin's-egg blue fabric. To the left, a barnacle-covered basin perches upon an antique stand.





Opposite: A symphony of soft neutrals, an oversized steel window, and a custom Peck & Company table create a pleasant place to enjoy morning meals in the breakfast room. This page, top: West repurposed a 137-inch-long, 17th-century sacristy cabinet as an island. "Every single detail inside each drawer is planned out for organization," says the designer, who added hand-picked antique hardware, built-in shelving, and even a trash drawer. Above left: The pool area offers a beautiful setting for overflow guests to gather. Above right: The ceiling of the wine cellar, clad in authentic firebrick collected around Europe, was curved into a groin vault for a grotto effect. The Barr Gris stone flooring was sourced from a domaine near Nîmes, France.



at the front courtyard, she placed an antique fountain before a backdrop of sleek, steel doors by Atelier Domingue. Indoors, the design team eliminated most moldings and trims to better showcase the home's high ceilings and handsome, Southern-sourced floors. Houston-based builder Parker House executed this ethereal plan, complete with sightlines that run straight through the home.

The great room showcases reclaimed wood beams retrieved from a failing structure on the family's own South Texas ranch. An antique chimney sourced from a farm in France's Lorraine region establishes an anchor for various conversation areas. On the far end of the room, a pair of circa 1750 doors from Avignon leads to a vestibule with a chateau-like master suite on the left and stairs up to the media room on the right.

In the kitchen, plaster-rubbed and waxed limestone floors set the stage for the room's *pièce de résistance*—an awe-striking island fashioned from an antique that West had reconfigured for a cook's every conceivable need. A duo of reproduction antique doors—the work of Leslie Sinclair of Segreto Finishes—brilliantly conceals both cabinetry and refrigerator.

Gracious as the residence may be, the homeowners' vision would not have felt complete without the means to share it, which is why they built a guesthouse. In fact, they had the privilege of lodging a family displaced by Hurricane Harvey last year. And, on the nights when it's not occupied, the guesthouse's rustic French kitchen performs another purpose—becoming a catering kitchen of sorts for the many gatherings that these owners love to host.

Opposite, top to bottom: The sumptuous master bedroom includes a shallow display cabinet and a cocktail table fashioned from a painted antique grate that has weathered over the decades. "Her" side of the master bath includes French doors that open onto a courtyard. This page: The vintage crystal chandelier in the guesthouse living room represents the designer's favorite piece on the property. "Looking from the pool, you can see it through the window," says West. "It looks so fabulous!"

