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A *fresh* Take on OLD WORLD FLAVOR



A custom carved fireplace from MCA Stone anchors the living room, surrounded by elegant, yet comfortable furniture that invites lingering. The television rests inside a custom made console with a lift to the right of the fireplace. Brick and reclaimed wood beams add interest and warmth.



Story | CATHY GORDON *Photography* | BRIAN BOOKWALTER

A home is more than drywall and studs. Equally important is inspiration and imagination. This home by Jeff Paul Custom Homes in The Woodlands is flush with both, thanks to an intuitive relationship between designer and client.

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ome houses can leave you emotionally cold,” says Houston designer Bradley Weems, who was intent on making this East Shore home a haven for longtime friends, David and Cheryl Schott. Like any intuitive professional who has collaborated with the same family over a span of years, he has learned to channel their tastes.

“There’s something profoundly moving about a house that tells the story of family and expresses how they want to live,” Weems says. “We especially warm to houses that have unique details and can incorporate materials that had a previous life. Houses like that speak to us.”

This one certainly does. Reclaimed wood beams, arched entryways in old Chicago brick, authentic, refurbished lighting from old Renaissance Europe and smooth worn-looking Venetian plaster walls in a soft ethereal palette with freehand flourishes—all come together to create a sense of place.

“There’s something **profoundly moving about a house that tells the story of family** and expresses how they want to live,” says Weems.

Groin vault ceilings and the liberal use of hand-carved stone heighten interest while fostering a sense of intimacy. The rooms are spacious yet feel cozy.

“I’m wondering how many times I heard Brad say, ‘It’s all in the details,’” says homeowner David, chuckling and pointing to 100-year-old beams crossing the kitchen ceiling. “It’s hard to manufacture that big old crack up there. You can’t duplicate that.” Judges with the Greater Houston Builders Association found the design nuances charming as well, awarding the house a coveted 2013 Houston’s Best PRISM Award.

“I don’t really have a ‘look.’ I go with my clients’ tastes and desires and just do things up the best I can,” Weems explains. “Take the kitchen, for example. It’s a cavernous space with high ceilings. It couldn’t be just drywall. That’s way too sterile. Cheryl had this idea that we should put wood up there. So that ceiling is made of old wood planks that were originally flooring years ago. It makes the room.”

Weems is nothing if not methodical and, at times, a little obsessed when it comes to good design. He endured sleepless nights trying to figure out what to do about the home’s stairwell. “That was a real design challenge,” he says of its location in the middle of the house, not in the usual up front, look-at-me place of prominence. “I wanted to put importance on it since it didn’t get that attention at the front door. It needed a shock effect.”



The wine grotto resembles those throughout France with its fauxed arched opening that looks like aged wood. A barrel vault ceiling in old Chicago brick and custom limestone tile mural of a vineyard scene add authenticity. The chandelier is a genuine artifact from Europe that was refurbished for the space.



A hand-drawn design does artful justice to the architecturally inspired ceiling in the master bathroom. Custom built vanities in dark wood contrast nicely with light Venetian plaster walls.

The master bedroom suite is a story of balance with dark woods counteracting certain feminine features such as the embroidered silk bedding. Two antique sconces from Italy adorn the wall above the hand-carved Peruvian travertine marble fireplace.

Weems may have lost sleep, but he created a dream of a staircase. It's the unexpected jewel of the home, outfitted in gorgeous block paneling distressed to resemble well-worn walls the likes of which are seen in old French villas. Add to that a Flemish tapestry that adorns the landing, wall sconces made from pieces of old French iron balustrades and a Weems-designed iron railing that complements a regal runner, and it's a real showstopper.

"It exceeded our expectations," says Cheryl, who had the utter-most faith in her designer friend. "Brad knows what he's doing and knows our tastes so it's a great collaboration. I mean, who else would let their designer alter their grandfather clock?"

Yes, with every attention to detail, there was just one item in the house that drove Weems a bit batty and presented a design challenge.

It was an anniversary grandfather clock that was a present from David to Cheryl 20 years ago—so polished and perfect. "When we brought it in the house with all this brick and rich old texture, it stood out like a sore thumb. So with their blessing, we beat up their grandfather clock to make it look old," Weems says. Design challenge solved. ♡

Visitors to the home are plenty comfortable in this guest room outfitted in warm neutrals with faux walls that resemble grass cloth.





Reclaimed wood beams and an antique tongue and groove ceiling adds a cozy feel to this cavernous kitchen. Transformations by Phyllis applied a unique paint technique to the refrigerator, making it appear as though it has inlaid-planked doors. A custom copper vent hood with soft curves offsets the straight-lined cabinetry. The large island is used in lieu of a breakfast room, allowing interaction with the cook in the kitchen.



Reclaimed wine barrels with tufted leather seats add charm in the game room wet bar. Pendants were custom made with red silk shades. The under-bar surface wall is a travertine stone mosaic tile.

This outdoor kitchen and covered courtyard gets year-round use. A combination of stone gives it that cohesive connection to the outdoors. A tumbled travertine pattern follows the curved shape of the groin vault ceiling. The custom copper gas lantern is from Bevolo.



Coming up with good design can seem daunting. But it doesn't have to be with these tips from Bradley Weems.

ADD PERSONALITY

Infuse your space with things that mean something to you. Blend family pieces like pictures and accessories with favorite items from travels to give the home a soulful mix.

BLEND OLD WITH NEW

Homes shouldn't look like their furniture was lifted from a showroom. Mix antiques with new pieces and blend in organic textures like reclaimed wood and stone.

COLOR MATTERS

Stick to shades that aren't too light or strong and pair with grays, sands and khaki to soften the look. Try painting the trim of a room rather than the entire wall and add bold colored pillows, a few large accessories or art in bold colors to add a touch of drama.