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FRENCH LESSON

INSPIRED BY THE CHÂTEAUS OF FRANCE'S DORDOGNE RIVER VALLEY, A HOUSTON COUPLE BUILD A NEW HOME IN MCLEAN WITH VERY OLD ROOTS.

WRITTEN BY JENNIFER SERGENT PHOTOGRAPHY BY GORDON BEALL

INTERIOR DESIGN Sandra Lucas, Lucas/Eilers Design Associates, LLP

ARCHITECTURE Bulent A. Baydar and Gregory L. Palmer, Harrison Design Associates

HOME BUILDER Richard Ellis, Mitch Racoosin and Stephen Yeoman Jr., Artisan Builders

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE Charles L. Owen, Fine Landscapes Ltd.

BEDROOMS 5 | BATHROOMS 8 | SQUARE FEET 17,000



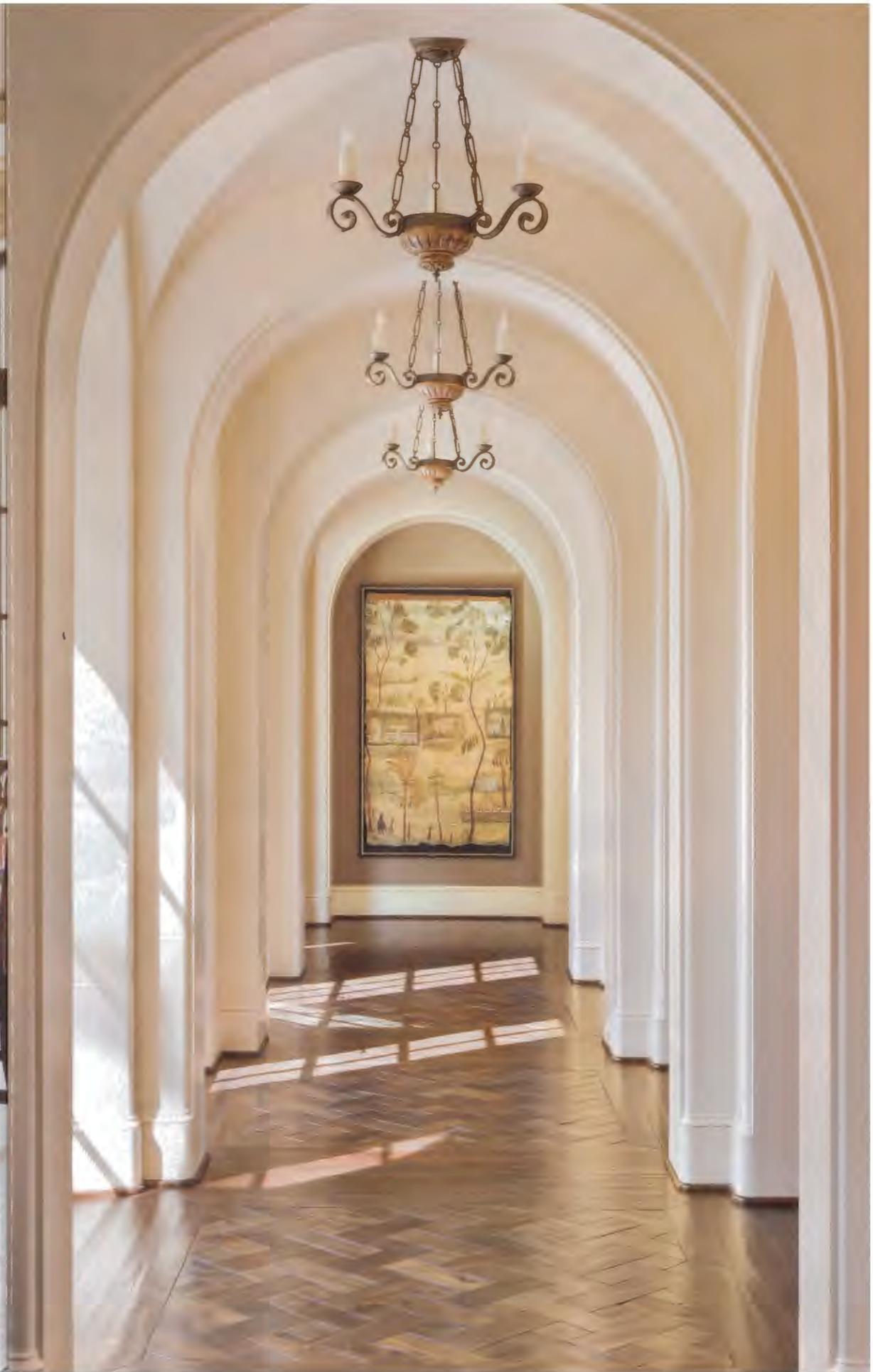
It's a tall order by any measure: Build a Texas-size house in a Washington, D.C., suburb that doesn't look or feel big, and give it the old-world styling of a French chateau that's flooded with light. Such was the task for the team commissioned by a Houston couple who moved to the D.C. area and chose to build their permanent home in nearby McLean. "They had lived all over the world, due to the husband's position as president of an international corporation, and desired a house that would resemble a country estate with European influences," says Sandra Lucas, a Houston interior designer who had fashioned three other homes for the couple.

"Everything came together in this house," says Lucas, owing in large part to the talents assembled to create it. With the designer on board, the owners turned to Stephen Yeonas Jr., who helmed the build and whose firm also sold them their land. Yeonas—who worked on the project alongside partners Richard Ellis and Mitch Racoosin—then called upon





Windows' steel doors flood the dining room with light. A custom Matt Camron rug and a tablecloth clad in Manuel Canovas fabric brighten the elegant dining table positioned under the chandeliers by David Iatesta. *Opposite:* Interior designer Sandra Lucas commissioned the David Street Wiggins painting in the gallery.





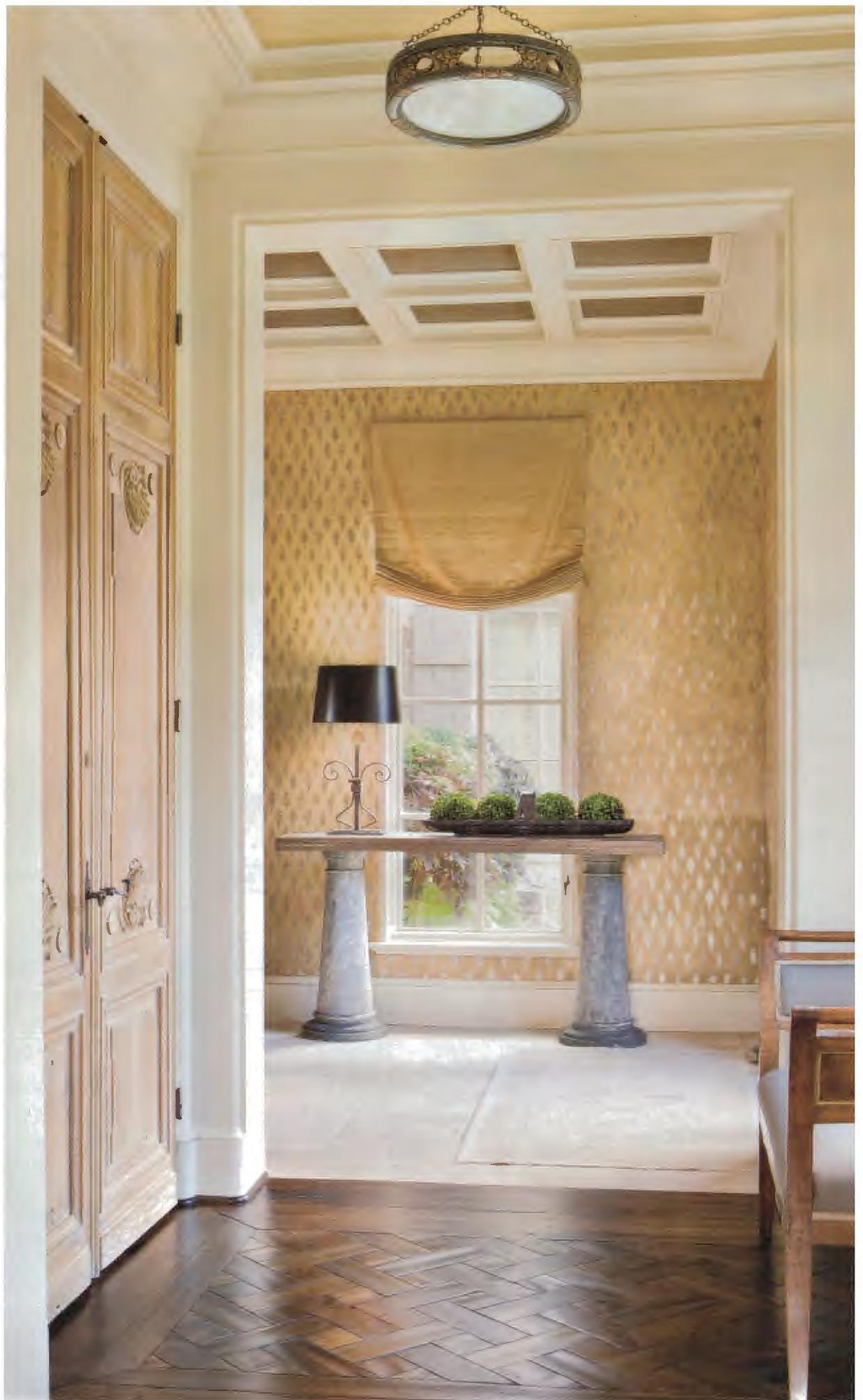
It took 12 men to hoist the reclaimed beams into place in the kitchen and adjoining great room. An antique inspired the custom lanterns, and the vintage fireback from 2 Lucy's in Houston accents the cooktop. Custom barstools from George Cameron Nash feature Edelman Leather hides and pull up to countertops from GLB Tile & Marble Co.

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architect Bulent A. Baydar and introduced the owners to landscape designer Charles L. Owen, who is known for his French-influenced style. "It was this great collaboration," the wife says of their ability to translate her ideas. "We had a good program for the spaces and services we wanted in the house and had strong ideas about the style we desired, particularly in the areas where we spend a lot of time."

Baydar, who worked with architect Gregory L. Palmer on the home, began the process by showing the owners several pictures of châteaux in France's Dordogne River Valley region—the residences are notable for their pale stone walls and dark slate roofs. "The couple just went for it," Baydar says, approving an exterior design that reads as a casual French country house, but with an interior that's "a little more formalized." To that end, Lucas specified details such as hand-scraped parquet floors, coffered ceilings, hand-painted finishes and elegant custom light fixtures that hang from groin-vaulted galleries. In addition, the designer lightened the feel everywhere by eliminating window casings and door moldings.

Baydar then designed intimate spaces connected by vestibules, anterooms and galleries. "The house slowly reveals itself as you're walking through—you want every aspect of the home to have its own feel, its own shape, so it's not all thrown at you at once." That's why details were so important in each space—inside and out. Some of the most notable ones came from a Paris trip that included Lucas, Owen, Racoosin and the wife.





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During this trip, Owen, who grew up in France and speaks fluent French, selected an octagonal Provençale fountain for the rear of the house to anchor a classic parterre garden of boxwoods and ground cover in alternating colors. He also chose antique gates that visitors step through to go out back. “The garden is set up to lure one into the space, and we took special care to create privacy but still invite a sense of intrigue as one comes through the gates,” explains Owen. “We wanted the outside of the home to relate to the inside and have a seamless integration that doesn’t just abruptly end when outdoors.”

Racoosin, meanwhile, scoured flea markets with Lucas and her client, looking for antique doors and fireplaces with their set of plans in hand. He helped the women figure out where the materials could go and made sure their measurements were conveyed back to the construction site. “Mitch has this architectural bent, so he really brought a lot to the party,” the wife says.

The Formations chandeliers in the master bedroom complement the headboard, which Lucas had made using an oak architectural fragment as a crown. The hand-screened draperies by Arena Design add flair to the subtle bedding by Leontine Linens. A custom rug from Carpet Impressions imparts dimension.



loggia underneath the home's expansive terrace and outdoor kitchen looks out toward French-style garden and fountain. The square-cut fieldstone on most of home's exterior was sourced from western Maryland. Tables from Joyce Horn Antiques and cozy seating by Lee Industries invite relaxation.