

PHOENIX HOME & GARDEN

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FEATURES

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RAISING THE BAR

A couple tasks a design team with infusing their new French Provincial-style abode with the character of its much-loved predecessor

By Rebecca L. Rhoades



DESERT REFLECTIONS

A carefully planned landscape blends seamlessly into its natural surround

By Cathy Cromell

Tap
Image

Raising THE Bar

*A Paradise Valley home
re-creates favorite spaces while
increasing sustainability*

BY REBECCA L. RHOADES
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT SANDLER



Tap
Image



Lighter, casual fabrics brighten the living area, which is anchored by a limestone fireplace with antique black firebrick. It is topped with an antique iron fireback. French doors lead to an uncovered patio. According to the architect, leaving the outside space uncovered brings natural light into the interior room while maintaining the stunning views of Camelback Mountain.

FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, A TEAM OF some of the best industry professionals came together to design and build a house that would set the standard for luxury Valley residences for years to come. Its antique ceiling beams, aged architectural elements and patinated surfaces stood out as authentic in an era when faux Tuscan style dominated.

Over the ensuing years, the owners took great pleasure in their abode, adding to their collections of art, books and decorative trinkets, and welcoming friends and family for grand functions. But as much as they loved the look and feel of the large house, their needs changed, and recently, they decided to build a new home. Not wanting to let







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—*Jerry Meek, builder*

A trio of arches separates the living room from the kitchen and dining area. Hanging above the antique French dining table is a pair of antique French basket chandeliers. “During the holidays, the homeowner adds greens or other decorations to the baskets when she’s entertaining,” says interior designer Karen Rapp.



go of the beauty and comfort that surrounded them, they called in the same team and tasked them with one request: to re-create their private haven on a smaller scale, but this time make it even better than before. Dubbed the A-Team by the homeowners, the creative group included builder Jerry Meek and his crew at Desert Star Construction; interior designer and *Phoenix Home & Garden* Masters of the Southwest award winner Karen Rapp; and Oz Architects.

“We did such a good job on the previous house that the owners challenged us to do the same thing but better and much smarter,” say Rapp. “There was a huge learning curve on the first home with materials and items that we used. We did a lot of new things with that house, but it really changed the standard and set the bar. People would say ‘I want what [the homeowners] have.’”

At about 30 percent smaller than the previous house, the new French Country/Provincial dwelling sits on a rolling corner-acre in Paradise Valley. Orientation of the structure was key, according to the architect, who notes that the quality of light inside

Good design is about a thousand things you feel but don't see.

—Jerry Meek, builder



Oak stairs lead from the dining area to guest accommodations and an outdoor loggia. The walls and stair risers are made of Texas limestone that's hand-chiseled to achieve a rough, natural face. It's a look that Meek developed for the owner's previous residence.





The lady of the house loves to collect fun and interesting items. Here, a grouping of porcelain mushrooms that she found in London sits on an antique wicker tea cart.

the home was important to the homeowners. And while new technology, new building materials and new sustainability features were incorporated into the structure, the home retains the warm touches and beloved spaces of its predecessor. “We continued to maintain what [the owners] loved but then enhanced it with things they wish they would have done more of or wished they would have done in the first place,” says Meek.

Walk through the large antique entry door, and you’re instantly transported to another time and place. “You’ll notice that we used a lot of antique reclaimed building materials, which was something we did on the previous house,” says the architect. “We didn’t do it to treat them as objects but to really weave them into the core of the building. It helps create a nice level of authenticity.” Antique ceiling beams imported from Belgium complement the weathered terra-cotta floor tiles, which are actually repurposed vintage ceiling tiles. “They’re all handmade and have really nice character,” the architect adds. “A lot of time, you’ll find one with a child’s or a dog’s footprint in it.”



A trio of arches separates the living room from the dining room, where rough, hand-chiseled Texas limestone walls anchor the space with rugged warmth. Most of the furnishings are French, Italian and Spanish antiques that the homeowners acquired over the years; the majority of pieces, as well as the accessories, were brought over from the previous house. “The homeowner has had a lot of her accessories for years. These are her mementos and her keepsakes,” says Rapp. “It’s all stuff that she’s collected, and it’s very personal to her.” Also salvaged from the old home were a substantial butcher block counter that tops a chunky island, all of the interior and exterior light fixtures, and the bathroom pedestal sinks.

Well-thought-out touches offer visual surprises throughout. To hide the unevenness of the beams, the ceiling comes down to meet the wood, eliminating visible fasteners. In the dining room, a simple wrought-iron banister appears to rest delicately on oak stairs. Thin metal window frames, finished to resemble wood, seem to vanish, opening the interiors to breath-taking views of





Camelback Mountain. And in an office and the library, tiny windows are framed by antique stone surrounds. “Those kinds of details are very complex to do, but they look very simple when they’re done,” notes Meek.

Many of the structure’s unique attributes, however, are not as obvious. Certified LEED silver (to receive LEED certification, homes must meet a number of prerequisites and earn points to achieve one of four levels: certified, silver, gold or platinum), the house features such eco-friendly elements as energy-efficient glazing on the windows and doors, tankless water heaters, energy-smart appliances, low-flow plumbing fixtures, a super high-efficiency cooling system, and a solar panel array that’s hidden from

In the master bath, an antique Basque cabinet separates his and hers vanity areas. The pedestal sinks are from the homeowners’ previous house. Custom-designed floating wood cabinets feature mirrors inside and out.





The man of the home's office is clad in antique train boards. The wood's black patina is the result of decades' worth of embedded soot and train exhaust, which also creates a rich, smoky aroma. Above the computer monitor is an antique roulette wheel. An antique French leather wingback chair sits in the corner.



view above the garage. Outside, a fertigation system, which adds fertilizer to the yard's irrigation system and balances the Ph of the water, allowing it to be more efficiently absorbed by landscape vegetation, decreases water usage by approximately 25 percent.

“This house is just a fraction of the cost for operating, in every area, compared with other homes, and a big part of our mission was to implement these features without affecting the aesthetics. It's not about throwing up solar. It's not about having a plaque on the house. It's about ‘do we need it?’ Living in the house should be the first priority,” says Meek, who adds that good design is about a thousand things you feel but don't see.

And for the satisfied homeowners, those thousand things come down to having a good team that understands exactly what it's doing. “This time around, we were able to work smarter and more efficiently,” says Rapp. “It was like being a sculptor who really gets to know his materials. Now we're just able to sculpt and make everything perfect.” 🏡





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A raised fireplace provides the perfect backdrop for a comfortable conversation area in the loggia. The chiseled limestone walls and antique terra-cotta tiles and wood beams offer continuous flow from the home's interior. The carrier beam, on which the chandelier is attached, is embedded with a heavy steel rod, allowing it to serve as a true support beam.





ABOVE: While only an acre in size, the backyard seems much larger, thanks to Berghoff's use of depth of field to create layers (the pool, rolling lawn, and house). Soft mounds of annuals add pops of color near the kidney-shaped pool.

LEFT: "The property has an organic nature to it," says landscape designer Jeff Berghoff. In the front yard, he installed a variety of low-water-use plants, including bursage, dwarf holly, creosote bush, and palo verde and ironwood trees.

Raising THE Bar

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