



HOUSTON LEGACY

With European Elan

INTERIOR DESIGN BY PAMELA PIERCE LANDSCAPE DESIGN BY DANNY MCNAIR

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PETER VITALE TEXT BY NANCY PEROT MULFORD



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leafy refuge. PRECEDING PAGES: Landscape architect Danny McNair collaborated with the Pierces to create outdoor spaces complementing home's French-style architecture. Stone 18th-c. trough converted into fountain. Antique wooden door leading to secret garden. ABOVE: Limestone 18th-c. sink and 19th-c. French bronze gooseneck faucet. Custom jardiniere; stone 17th-c. urn; and iron 19th-c. table with limestone top. In kitchen courtyard, custom table surrounded by 19th-c. French garden chairs. French lanterns flank doorway; antique iron table with stone top. OPPOSITE: Parterre garden bordered with Japanese yew and boxwoods; crushed limestone pathway.



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amela Pierce did two renovations of the 1920s home she shares with husband Jesse in Texas. **OPENING PAGES:** Exterior French doors were arched. **ABOVE:** In living room, Louis XV-style canopé, 19th c., in Florio Collection linen. Italian 17th-c. cassone as cocktail table. Régence mirror, vintage French chandelier and 18th-c. Portuguese armchair. French 18th-c. walnut finials as lamps. **OPPOSITE:** Swedish 18th-c. secretary. Gustavian canopé. Rustic 18th-c. table. Oushak rug. **FOLLOWING PAGES:** Italian 18th-c. table as writing desk. Régence mantel.

FOR TEXAS-BASED DESIGNER PAMELA PIERCE, it was love at first sight. The instant she stepped inside the 1920s French Mediterranean-style residence, located in Houston's Museum District, she knew she had come home. Despite mirrored walls and decades of other decorative injustices that had been layered on, the refined quality of the architecture could not be disguised.

"Old homes should be allowed to age gracefully," Pierce says. Instinctively, she knew what needed to be done to return the structure to its original beauty and to reveal its old soul. So, with a promise to her husband Jesse to "just paint," she began the first of two extensive renovations of their house.

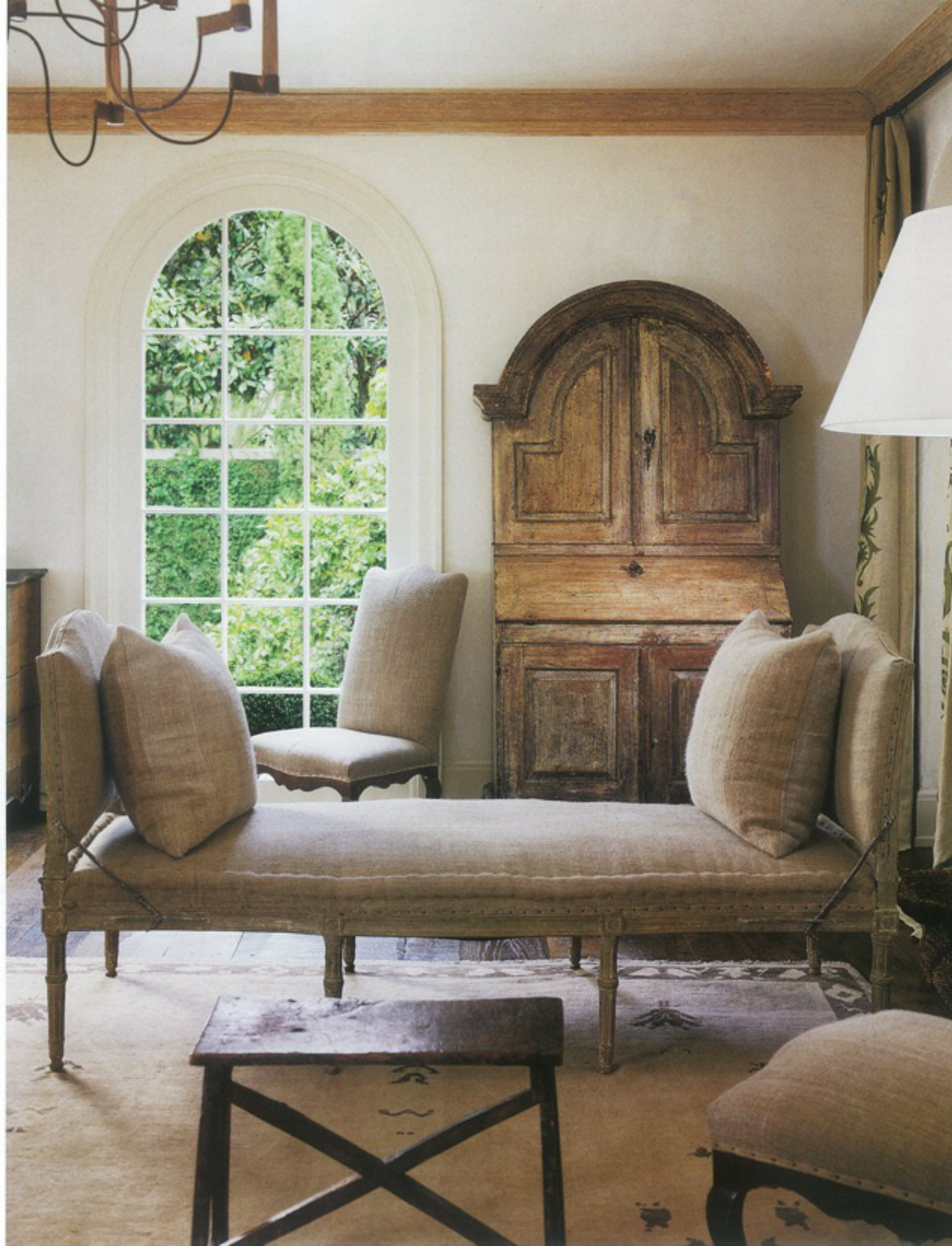
"We really did intend to just paint," designer Pierce explains with a laugh. "But then the plaster had to be redone, and then we decided that adding interior arches would create the illusion of ceiling height, and by then we found fabulous antique floors to install, and, well, one thing just

led to another and another." She recalls how she and her husband lived only on the third floor for eighteen months.

Four years later, the couple undertook a second renovation, living without a kitchen for many months. At that time, contractor Louis Alvaredo installed the antique flooring and architectural pieces. "He displayed such patience and creativity that no one would ever dream that these elements were not original to the house," Pierce says.

Italian eighteenth-century cathedral stone creates an atmosphere of serene solidity in the kitchen and breakfast room. Chestnut and walnut floors from the same century imbue the living and dining rooms with additional warmth and texture. French seventeenth-century limestone mantels establish strong focal points and anchor the spaces.

Thoughtfully designed gardens and courtyards complement the home and exhibit the same restraint seen in the interiors. Houston landscape designer Danny McNair worked closely with the homeowners to interpret their







Neutral palette rich in textures.
 ABOVE: Venetian 17th-c. fauteuil beside arched doorway leading to solarium. Florio Collection embroidered linen panels suspended from iron rod. Italian 17th-c. walnut center table holds Biot jar with small olive tree. Gustavian Swedish armchairs. RIGHT AND COVER: An 18th-c. statue of St. Francis and 19th-c. statue of saint, both from Mexico. Beyond opening, custom chairs slipcovered in Rogers & Goffigon linen near 17th-c. French limestone fireplace.





Dramatic setting. PRECEDING PAGES: Italian trestle table, Basque side table, French dining chairs and Swedish Queen Anne triple-back settee, all 18th c. Custom bench in Florio Collection linen skirt. Vintage French chandelier is one of a pair. Antique Spanish vessels. Painting by Hayes Friedman. Imported antique walnut herringbone floors. ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: In breakfast area, Swedish scrub table with French benches, both 19th c. Napoleon III butcher shop table with 19th-c. zinc cow's head. Italian 18th-c. stone floor. French 19th-c. lantern.

vision. Crushed limestone is used in a shady courtyard. The texture highlights a set of French *faux bois* garden chairs and an eighteenth-century stone trough converted into a softly splashing fountain. A steel arbor, covered in evergreen vines, creates an intimate enclosure. Antique garden elements are placed around the grounds to achieve a balance of decorative interest and plantings.

But the true hallmark of this home, and of Pierce's style, is a pervading spirit of peacefulness. She believes that with the pace and the pressures of modern life, a home needs to be a refuge of tranquility. Led by instinct and experience, she achieves this by utilizing a neutral, richly textured palette, old materials and well-chosen, well-placed antiques. Overscale pieces and comfortable furniture, slip-covered in handwoven French linen, rest on soft seagrass rugs. Sunlight filters through the leaves of arching oak trees and pours through uncurtained windows. In the winter, the ambiance is further warmed by the presence of four

working fireplaces, including one in the guest room.

There is no excess, no clutter. A soothing serenity comes from objects having room to breathe and not competing with one another for attention.

"I have really learned to discern what I want to keep around me now," Pierce explains. "If a piece speaks to me, I know I can always find a place for it, but I am also very good at moving things out when they no longer seem to fit in here."

For Pierce, the best compliment is for someone to enter a room she has designed and simply want to stay. There is an intangible spirit to her spaces that casts a quiet, comforting spell, and visitors do tend to linger, reluctant to give up being surrounded by this soothing world.

The most successful designers have an intuitive understanding of human nature and what it longs for. For Pamela Pierce and her fortunate clients, a home is a place of renewal and deep contentment. □





Sweet dreams. ABOVE: Louis XV-style mantel with 19th-c. Napoleon III lantern. Louis XVI-style daybed. Swedish rococo armchair, 18th c. RIGHT: Bed panels in Dedar fabric. Duvet by Calvin Klein. Customized antique European shams. Gustavian stool and Portuguese colonial table, both 18th c. French figure, 19th c., as lamp. FOLLOWING PAGES: Sofa and chairs slipcovered in Rogers & Goffigon check. Vintage ottoman. Seagrass rug. Custom daybed in hemp from France.



