



## A CONTEMPORARY HOME IN PARADISE VALLEY IS TURNED INTO AN OLD WORLD JEWEL

BY JENN THORNTON

**N**estled in Paradise Valley is the heirloomed residence of a couple influenced by the Old World villas of Europe; a continent they love, frequently visit and admire for its existing architectural footprint, most evident in its manor-sized structures of character, visual composition and proportional relationships.

In response to this aesthetic, the couple set about to transform a 7,800-square-foot, whitewashed Santa Barbara-style home built in the 1980s and once owned by the Wrigley family (of Wrigley chewing gum fame) into what it is today — a testament to the traditional estate architecture that first inspired it.

To achieve character-rich interiors, cadence of space and European flair, the homeowners turned to Est Est Inc. in Scottsdale, and specifically to Elaine Alexander, a 20-year design veteran with a deep reserve of inspiration at the ready. Alexander has worked in both film production and costuming, as well as for Ralph Lauren's women's wear department — tenures that have allowed her to successfully conceive a visual plan (think storyboarding), isolate the issues associated with it (think script analysis) and create a cohesive look for the home (think fashion design).

Alexander's ability to think creatively and critically is evident in the home's layered interiors forged from materials with weight, drape and pattern. There was no room for trial and error during the yearlong design process.



Spanish-influenced chairs in the dining room have leather seats and tapistry backs that pair well with custom draperies made of cinnamon-colored silk and multicolored tassle fringes. Photo courtesy of Tony Hernandez.



Starting on this page, clockwise from left:

The theater room's rich ambience is established with velvet drapes the color of merlot and sculpted valences. Photo courtesy of Tony Hernandez.

The front courtyard features a meandering, swimmable, pool along with a bridge leading to the home's entrance. Photo courtesy of Tony Hernandez.

An upright sofa with high arms and high back in the living/music room provides seating for conversation and music enjoyment. Large windows allow in ample sunlight and provide open views to the rear patio. Photo courtesy of Tony Hernandez.

The homeowners enjoy entertaining and watching films with guests. Here, leather theater seating and a custom-designed alder wood frame for the screen make for a comfortable, luxurious space. Photo courtesy of Tony Hernandez.

"I qualified all the elements (millwork, trim, fabrics and finishes) several times with the client," Alexander says. "The fabrics were luxurious and complex. They were textured, had great snap, lots of trim and were pattern-on-pattern, because in old estates things are not perfectly matched (as they are) in a model home, for instance. The key was to get that aged look."

The successful marriage of design and function can be credited to the collaboration between the homeowners and the team at Est Est Inc., which worked tirelessly to give the home a vintage and, where appropriate, distressed look.

"That was the direction that the client wanted to take," Alexander explains.

Accordingly, the majority of the home's furnishings, and all of the wood pieces, were custom designed from sketches dimensioned and drawn by Alexander.

The home's Venetian-plastered exterior features an almost okra palette, with tones of tan and yellow that complement the surrounding geography without overwhelming it. The interiors exhibit a lush combination of warm jewel tones such as deep reds, amber and honey gold.

"My inspiration came from Italian and Mediterranean architecture on the whole," Alexander says, "and (the homeowners') color preference coincided with that look, so it worked out well."

Still, the project was not without its design challenges, the majority of which have to do with transformation: white walls to Old World warmth and the simultaneous treatment of the architecture and the decorative interior. Naturally, paint played a big role in the home's overall modifications. All walls are frescoed or painted with a Venetian-and-plaster finish to look textured; some feature frescoes or other decorative Italian finishes.

While every space in the home is noteworthy, a few stand apart for the uniqueness of their interiors. The best example of this is the 1930s-inspired media room, where state-of-the-art function meets cinematic fantasy.

"The space (initially a guest house) was a big part of the job and tricky because it stood out as a wing from the house and was windowed on three sides, which (the homeowners) wanted to cover and make dark," Alexander says. "At the same time they wanted a little whimsy."

Indeed, the couple remarked that the space was reminiscent of Howard Hughes' dramatic study in the Oscar-nominated film, "The Aviator."

This look was also accomplished in the "red room," a combination study/sitting room for the lady of the house. Formerly a guest room that was barely manageable in terms of size, it is now a fabric-filled space with velvet and gold draperies showing a striking red imprint that gives the illusion of history. Making it distinctive is Alexander's reverse approach to its overall design.

"I went contrary to the idea of the small room that if you paint it, light opens it up," she says. "In fact, I painted it dark and filled it up, making it cozy. (The homeowner) refers to it as her jewel box."

The small living room, or "music room," is another distinguished area replete with a grand piano and high-arm sofa warmed by the presence of lighted pillar candles and flooded with an abundance of natural light. It is, by all accounts, a dramatic and starry-eyed space that embodies the sensibility of the homeowners. It is a product of, as Alexander puts it, "where they were in their lives at the time," further describing this state of being as "romantic," "inviting" and "dramatic."

Despite the opulent accents and striking décor, the home's most defined interior element is its overall conversion from a Santa Barbara-styled home to a stateside desert residence with European character.

"I think we achieved their goal," says Alexander, whose design proves that, just like individual style, timeless interiors never go out of style and only improve with age. <sup>11</sup> <sup>12</sup>

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