



# REFRESHING REVIVAL

AN EXTENSIVE INTERIOR RENOVATION WITH NEW  
DETAILED MILLWORK AND PERFECTLY APPOINTED  
FURNISHINGS RESTORES A PARADISE VALLEY HOME  
TO ITS EUROPEAN ROOTS.

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When a couple returned to Arizona after years of living in Michigan, it was the generous acreage and spectacular sunset views of Camelback Mountain that drew them to this Paradise Valley home. And while its enviable surroundings is what first appealed to the couple, the residence also boasted enough old-world charm to support their Francophile leanings. “We always wanted a French-style house, and the exterior of this one looked like something from the French countryside,” says the wife.

The home, however, did not come without challenges. With its oversize porte cochere blocking the entry, shuttered windows obscuring the natural light, and kitchen cabinets sporting a shade of blue that went out of vogue more than two decades ago, no one questioned that the house was in desperate need of a remodel. “It was like this 1980s time capsule,” says designer Caroline Tyler DeCesare. “It was basically a dark box with overscaled rooms and very narrow hallways that hadn’t been touched in 30 years.”

To remedy the situation, the couple hired builder Nancy Brunkhorst after touring several of her projects. She in turn introduced them to architect Matthew Thomas and also provided suggestions for an interior designer—which included DeCesare, who they promptly hired. “I knew immediately that Caroline would be able to pinpoint our desired style,” says the wife.

That style was quickly defined as classic traditional with a French twist, but “We didn’t want super-fussy or gold gilt,” says the wife. In response, the team delineated a plan that was equal parts remove, redo and renew, and that started with the elimination of the porte cochere. “When it was removed and the front entry became more dominant on the elevation, the home became a more authentic version of a French Colonial Revival,” says Thomas.

In a similar spirit, whole sections of millwork, along with large expanses of wallcoverings—such as the mauve brocade that sheathed the living room—ended up on the chopping block. “All of the cabinets, millwork and trim were removed, redesigned and replaced,” says Brunkhorst, who also oversaw the renovation of the central staircase—an

**Above:** After removing the existing porte cochere, architect Matthew Thomas remodeled the structure with a covered entry and added leaded glass to the sides and top of the door. He also remodeled the roofline to match the existing one.

**Opposite:** Designer Caroline Tyler DeCesare introduced a Niermann Weeks chandelier to complement the new grand staircase, complete with a wrought-iron railing from Accent Design & Manufacturing. The custom-finished table is from Hickory White.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: TILE PHOTO: COURTESY TABARKA STUDIO.







**Opposite:** In the living room, a Paul Ferrante hutch from John Brooks Incorporated is filled with books and framed photos. The E.J. Victor chair is upholstered with Opuzen printed leather and the artwork is from the homeowners' collection.

**Below:** Baker sofas and a Highland House coffee table from Jack Pesarczyk Associates join Henredon armchairs and a Vallone Design table in the living room. An existing chandelier hangs above a rug from Azadi Fine Rugs. DeCesare purchased the mirrors at an antique fair in Round Top, Texas.



“THE HOUSE NEEDED TO FEEL WARM  
AND INVITING; IT WAS THE TYPE OF  
DESIGN WE ALL WANTED.”

-CAROLINE TYLER DECESARE



**Opposite:** The designer added French doors to the breakfast room to strengthen the indoor-outdoor connection. The casual space includes furnishings from the homeowners’ collection and a Paul Ferrante chandelier from John Brooks Incorporated.

**Below:** A French Lacanche range, backed by hand-painted tiles from Tabarka Studio, was the first purchase for the kitchen. The cabinets are by Desert Cove Woodworks and the custom-painted light fixtures are by Currey & Company.



awkward curving structure that was squared off at the top with bookcases. After salvaging just the skeleton of the stairs, an elegant, swooping wrought-iron railing was then added. For the surrounding plaster walls, the builder called on her crew of old-world plaster craftsmen to supply the beautifully rounded surfaces. “The unique, hand-troweled two-plaster technique is always soft on the eye,” she adds. To make the house more livable, Thomas opened up the isolated kitchen to the family room and moved the dining room—originally tucked under and behind stairs—to the front of the house and closer to the mountain views. Then, with the room rearranging complete, DeCesare and project manager Kelsey Hunzeker got busy establishing a balance between formal and informal styles, a look more closely tailored to the needs of the homeowners.

Bergères sporting printed silk, for instance, signal the entrance to the formal living room, where, visible through a new arch in the entry, are a set of shelter-arm sofas in a linen-velvet. In the dining room, a pair of outmoded mirrored curio cabinets made way for the owners’ Habersham reproduction antique cabinets. DeCesare then added a dark walnut table surrounded by chairs wearing cut-velvet brocade on the front and a light-colored Fortuny stripe on the back to provide a fine counterpoint. In contrast, the family room’s centerpiece is a cushy oversize sectional backed by a console table comprising a long wood plank and two metal sawhorses. “The day before the install I was out hunting for some final items and I saw this monstrously long table and thought it would make the perfect casual statement for the room,” says DeCesare.





French doors were added to the main house for access to the resurfaced bluestone patio on the front side of the house, where wicker furnishings from Restoration Hardware surround a fire pit. The gathering space was designed for optimal sunset vistas of the Praying Monk rock formation atop Camelback Mountain.

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In one of the guest rooms, DeCesare paired a bench from Eloquence with an existing bed detailed with silver-leaf accents and topped with French-inspired linens by Arhaus. A carved lamp from The Willows sits on a nightstand from Gabby.



Taking informal to yet another level is the game room, where the dark wood beams inject a rustic feel. Formerly the television room, the central hangout was reshaped to strengthen the indoor-outdoor connection. “Before, the incredible mountain view was totally neglected,” says Thomas, who added sliding doors that open to the back, as well as French doors on the opposite wall to maintain the formality of the front elevation.

When it came time to update the terrain, landscape designer Jeff Berghoff stepped in. “The property had been in various states of deferred maintenance for years,” he says. “But there was a lot of existing vegetation that only needed to be trimmed and reshaped. So rather than scrape and rebuild, we opted to enhance the existing landscape.” To the original pool area, Berghoff added a ramada and a spa, and then established a walking path where the owners can stroll to the outskirts of the property amidst the mesquite, ironwood and other native trees he

planted. “As you move closer to the house, it becomes more classical, with retaining walls that create panels of lawn more in keeping with the French theme,” he says.

On both sides of the property Berghoff designed fire features intended to draw the owners and their guests to the outdoors—and the plan worked. The fire pit on the front side of the house, for instance, has now become a favorite evening gathering spot to watch the sunsets, adding to the list of changes that contributed to the successful refreshment of the property. As the architect notes: “We were able to redefine the entire look of the house and elevate it to the standards of both the owners and the neighborhood.” As for the homeowners—a couple who pride themselves on having a welcoming home—this one hit the mark. “The house is casual and comfortable yet has the classic traditional style we like so much,” says the wife. “Because that’s how we are as a couple.” ■

A freestanding tub with views to the outdoors defines the sumptuous master bathroom. The honed marble floors, bathtub and tub filler are all from Waterworks. The Colefax & Fowler valance was fabricated by Dressed to Kill Custom Drapery; the metal shelving is from Bungalow.