



*French*

# ACCENT

*Old-world elegance meets twenty-first-century design in this Boca Raton estate thoughtfully renovated to suit a sophisticated family*

By Judy Martel | Photography by Kim Sargent

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT DAVID FONT DESIGNED THE HOME'S GARDENS, WHICH ARE BEHINDSCENE OF A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ROYAL RETREAT WITH A MODERN TWIST. MORE THAN 50 VARIETIES OF NATIVE PLANTS COMPLEMENT DRAMATIC SCULPTURES, LIKE THE PIECE ON THE RIGHT, THAT THE HOMEOWNERS PURCHASED FROM THE PREVIOUS RESIDENTS.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: HAND-MADE BRASS LAMPFRONS AND CUSTOM FINISHED CABINETS ADD ELEGANCE TO THE KITCHEN; AN ANCIENT CHINESE PAINTING FRAMED BY PEBBLE-ARCHED, THE MASTER SUITE; NEWLY REPAVED LINGSTONE AROUND THE POOL HIGHLIGHTS A HORSE SCULPTURE ACQUIRED FROM THE PREVIOUS OWNERS.

Some homes are mausoleums of “good taste,” while others are slaves to trends or pioneers of the digital age. The French Regency-style mansion of Edouard Louis and Elizabeth Anne de La Tour d’Auvergne Lauraguais manages to present as impressively grand, but boasts an underlying refinement and solidity that makes it appear as if it has harbored generations of tradition. Yet it wasn’t always this way.

Only completed in 2004, the home, located in the upscale St. Andrews Country Club community in Boca Raton, sat empty for 10 years before the de La Tours purchased it. Gil Walsh Interiors worked with the couple over four years to renovate the interior, with the goal of merging Edouard and Elizabeth’s styles—his more classic, she’s more contemporary—into a harmonious union that reflects their emphasis on family as well as their taste. The result is an estate that exemplifies the same subdued, timeless elegance that also defines the couple.

“We really fell in love with the architecture of the house,” says Elizabeth. “We already lived in St. Andrews and wanted a bigger lot. We thought this house had a lot of potential, but it [had] totally different decor inside. We decided if we did this, we’d have to do a lot of work.”

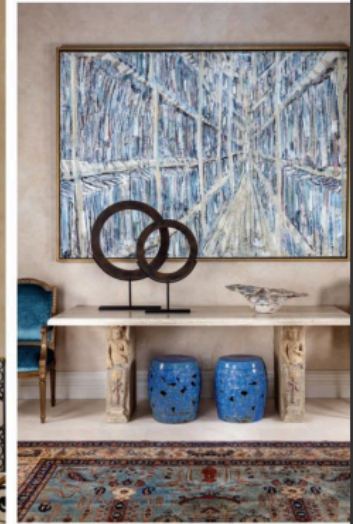
Elizabeth is no stranger to renovation, having redesigned most of the homes she and Edouard have lived in, and enjoys the process. The goal was to tone down the bright gold accents, open up the flow, and declutter the entire interior to suit their lifestyle.

“The home was French Regency on the outside but wasn’t really speaking French on the inside; it was more Hollywood-extravagant,” explains Elizabeth.

Edouard likens it to environs conducive to large-scale business entertaining rather than family living. “There was a huge built-in bar along one wall of the living room, with a bust of Caesar,” he recalls.

The bright red walls also struck a discordant note. “This wasn’t a house for reds,” says Elizabeth. “I wanted a soft color palette.”

The couple sought a richly layered, sophisticated aesthetic that would showcase their extensive art collection and a cu-



AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE FOYER (LEFT AND ABOVE) AND LIVING ROOM (BELOW), MUCH OF THE DESIGN WAS BASED ON ANTIQUE FRENCH BUSS THAT THE GIL WALSH INTERIORS TEAM PURCHASED SPECIALLY FOR EACH ROOM. DURING THE PROCESS, THEY BROUGHT IN MANY OPTIONS, SOURCING INVENTORY FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY, INCLUDING THE DOBBS LESLIE BLAU AND NAEMTAL COLLECTION IN NEW YORK CITY.



rated selection of oriental carpets, but also exude a comfortable family vibe. For help gutting and refashioning the entire interior, they engaged Walsh, well-known for uniting various design penchants, and her senior designer, Ashleigh Wilson. By mutual agreement, Elizabeth took the lead on the interior. “She did everything, with the help of Ashleigh and Gil,” says Edouard.

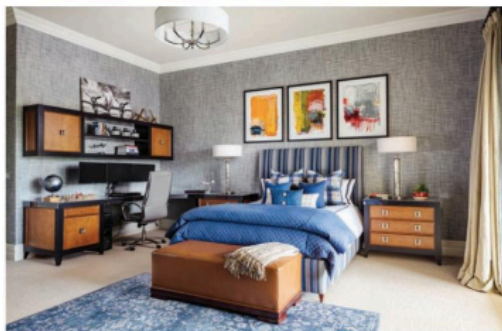
“I know what he likes, and we wanted to do a fusion of both our styles,” says Elizabeth. “Ed [is] more traditional. I can be more daring, and I needed someone who can mix styles.”

Over the course of several meetings, Wilson distilled the couple’s tastes down to their essence, resulting in a design that adheres to the





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: CUSTOM CABINETRY IN THE GALLERY FRAMES A COLLECTION OF HAN DYNASTY FIGURES; THE MASTER BATHROOM MAINTAINS THE ORIGINAL TILE; LADIES' POWDER ROOM; CUSTOM FURNITURE, SOME BUILT-IN, WITH TWO-TONE STAIN FINISHES; HEROES STYLE AND UTILITY IN A BEDROOM FOR THE COUPLE'S SON.



architectural integrity of the home but with a more classic, clean look. "They don't like a lot of clutter," Wilson explains. "They also had definite ideas, which simplified the process."

For Edouard, the home's French architecture felt reminiscent of his family's residence in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he grew up. The couple has lived in Florida for most of their married life and came to St. Andrews from Weston because it was a more convenient location for their children's

activities and because Edouard loves to golf. They like it so much that they've now owned four homes there. "St. Andrews is *the* place," he says. "[It has] a little bit of everything, except the ocean."

As with any major renovation, the couple encountered some unique challenges. One was the cabinetry in the gallery off the family room, where they wanted to display a collection of Han Dynasty-era Chinese warriors and porcelain. "I removed the guts of the cabinetry and redesigned it, then completely refinished it," says Wilson. The Chinese warriors had not been out of their crates in eight years because the couple had no place to feature them in their former home. "We were concerned about the fragility," Wilson continues. "I had an art expert open the box so I could measure them and make sure the new design would accommodate them. Then I added special lighting behind them and had the art expert place them on the shelves."

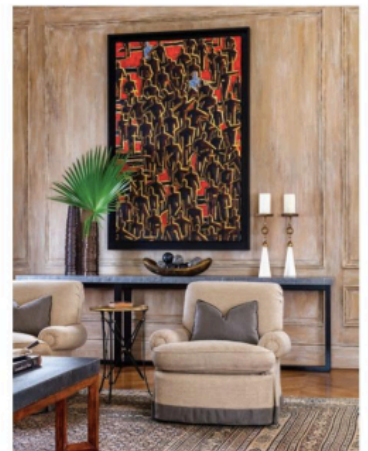


Moving on to the dining room, Elizabeth says they changed the decor but left much of the room intact, even purchasing the table and chairs from the home's previous owners. "The hardest part for me and for Gil was the color issue," she adds. "I like muted colors, blues, and some deep reds. If you look at the carpet, it can just look all beige."

Walsh and Wilson solved the issue by maintaining the subdued palette but picking out accent colors to bring drama to the room. "There's beauty in contrasts, and if you keep furnishings and colors in contrast it creates an artistic composition and is the secret to really good design," says Walsh. "We pulled minor colors from the oriental carpets and put [them] on the walls and then pulled in pops of color from the carpet. The carpet looks mostly beige and gray, but there are small bits of russet or blue that we incorporated into other elements in the room."

Being that this is a family home, Edouard and Elizabeth also sought input from their two grown sons for the upstairs bedrooms. "It's part of the process of understanding the family," Wilson notes. "Who likes modern and who likes classic? One son, who was more artistic, also needed the room to function with a work space able to accommodate his large

ABOVE: WALSH AND WILSON INFUSED COLOR IN THE DINING ROOM BY PULLING OUT THE FRENCH BLUE HUE FROM THE ANTIQUE TURKISH SULTANARAD RUG FOR THE WOOD-PANELED WALLS. RIGHT: ELIZABETH AND EDOUARD'S ARTWORK REPRESENTS A MIXTURE OF TRADITIONAL AND MODERN PIECES COLLECTED THROUGHOUT THEIR MARRIAGE.

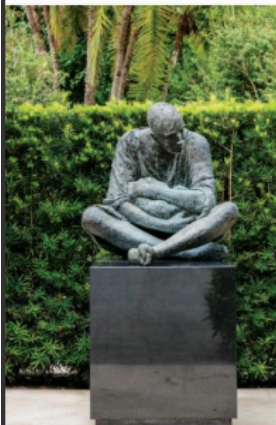




CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: A CUSTOM-MADE GAMEROOM CONCEPTS POOL TABLE PAIRS WITH A REMOVABLE CYPRESS DINING TOP BY GIL WALSH INTERIORS; THE DESIGNERS TONED DOWN THE BRIGHT BRASS LIGHT FIXTURES IN THE LIBRARY WITH A BURNISHED, UNDERSTATED FINISH; A STRIKING SCULPTURE COMMANDS ATTENTION IN THE GARDENS.



ABOVE: THE FAMILY ROOM EXUDES CASUAL SOPHISTICATION WITH SOFAS UPHOLSTERED IN SCHUMACHER STIRÉ VELVET, FRENCH PLEATED DRAPERY PANELS IN WATERHOUSE AND POLLACK FABRICS, AND ARTWORK FROM THOMAS HEATHMAN. BELOW: OBELISKS AND BOWS OF POTTED PURPLE BOUGAINVILLEA FLANK THE PATHWAY TO THE FOLLY, WHICH CONTAINS AN OFFICE.



computers." She extended the desk area with built-in cabinets and shelves that look like they've always been there. The couple also requested a bedroom to be decorated in sweet pinks for their two granddaughters.

Outside, on a tour of the gardens, Edouard takes the lead, rambling along paved pathways punctuated with dramatic sculptures purchased from the former owners and potted trees strategically placed to lead visitors on a pleasant stroll. "Ed loves his gardens," says Elizabeth, as Edouard names off a few of the 50 species of native trees and plants. Huge pots of purple bougainvillea line the walkway to a separate building called a folly, which was reconfigured into an office. Further on, with many a neighbor's house to obstruct the peaceful scene, Edouard points out gardenias, a blood orange tree, three Poinciana trees that provide flaming color in the summer, and three gumbo limbo trees, one of which was upended during Hurricane Irma in 2017 and subsequently righted with a crane. Adjacent to the pool, a shaded area with a built-in barbecue and casual seating provides "a nice place to have a cup of coffee in the morning," says Elizabeth.

Back inside the living room, by way of the family room with its comfortable furniture

swathed in plush blankets where the dogs love to curl up, Elizabeth and Edouard settle in and reflect on the project. "If I had to say I had a favorite room, it would probably be this one," says Elizabeth. "I like to sit here and look at the art and just feel it. I can't describe it very well, but it's just peaceful. Each piece of art has a different feel for me, and when I look at each one, I remember the very first time I saw it. I don't really look at the artist—if a piece speaks to me, I buy it. I think that's the beauty of art. It's not the price and it's not the artist; it's if I can communicate with it."

Elizabeth says she loves to "fix" homes. "It's becoming a hobby, but this one has been the most exciting because it showed the biggest change. When you see the house from the outside, it's very dramatic. Some people see it as a castle, but we don't see it that way. This is a home to be lived in, not a showcase. It's a big house, but at the same time it's cozy and easy to navigate." The soft color scheme reflects "the way we think we are," she adds. "We are not flashy; we're very low-profile. We wake up in the morning and are happy here." ◀◀

