

# Worldly Design

A HOUSTON FAMILY  
COMBINES ITS CHINESE  
HERITAGE WITH A LOVE  
OF FRENCH DESIGN IN  
A NEW-CONSTRUCTION  
RESIDENCE.



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Previous pages: A grid of metal and glass separates the foyer from the dining room and echoes the square pattern of the Ann Sacks tile on the entry floor. These pages: The massive Asian-inspired screen, a find from the George Cameron Nash Showroom in Houston, was the inspiration for the formal living room's palette. Opposite, top to bottom: Architectural designer Robert Dame notes that the Duke Mansion in New York City was "the genesis" of his plans for the home. The formal living room's understated antique mantel was a find from Houston's Chateau Domingue.



If I were to write a book, it would be called *Fresh French*," says interior designer Julie Dodson. As the owner of Julie Dodson Interiors in

Houston, the designer loves mixing French flair with Southern charm in the homes of her clients. "I like to blend styles and give my designs just enough whimsy or edge to make them interesting," she says.

For Jane Chen and Cunyun Ye's new-construction residence, Dodson was given free rein to employ this mix with the help of architectural designer Robert Dame of Robert Dame Design and builder Brian Thompson of Thompson Custom Homes. "I had designed the house across the street, and the homeowners saw my work there and liked it," Dodson says. "They especially loved the French aspects." But because the owners are of Chinese descent, they also desired for their heritage to be celebrated throughout the design in both large and small ways. "They wanted it to have a simplicity on the inside," Dame says. "And they were especially cognizant of creating areas to showcase their art pieces."

Through the course of the two-year project, Dodson met with the homeowners only a handful of times. Instead, she relied on texts and emails to show them options for specific items, all the while earning their trust through her ability to understand their tastes from the start. "The very first time I met Jane, she was dressed in







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Brunello Cucinelli,” Dodson says. “After I put together the design presentation and showed it to her, she said, ‘How did you get my style so well?’ I told her it was her fashion. It was very sophisticated with soft, subtle colors, so I knew what she liked right away.”

The only specific requests from the clients involved the nods to their heritage. For example, they asked Dame to

employ a feng shui principle in the entry by creating a transitional space that separates the exterior energy from the interior. Other Chinese influences are found in the décor. In the dining room, a timeless neutral Gracie wallpaper in an Asian-influenced pattern takes center stage. A custom painting in the foyer features the likeness of several of the homeowners’ family members, bringing a personal note to the design.

Dodson also included her signature twists in the home, giving it a vitality that flows throughout the spaces. “The owners are a younger couple with two children, so I thought it was important for the home to convey their active, energetic lifestyle,” the designer says. The couple also likes to entertain and needed a large accessible



This page: The foyer features several vignettes, including a large mirror with contemporary-style poufs. The mirror reflects the gracious size of the space leading to the stairwell. Opposite: A work by Hongnian Zhang has depictions of the homeowners’ family members painted into its scene.







A balance of private and public spaces is found throughout the home, as seen in the juxtaposition of the open bar area (left, bottom left, and below) and the more secluded library (above and opposite). The bar is centrally located near the kitchen and family room, making it easily accessible for entertaining. The two-story library houses the couple's massive book collection.







The design's sophisticated neutral hues are punctuated with unexpected hints of modernism, as seen in the contemporary light fixture by Ochre hanging over the breakfast table. Opposite: Interiors-inspired furnishings, such as the skirted upholstered bench and French wire chandelier, carry over to the loggia, making it a natural extension of the home.







area for gatherings. “That’s one reason the bar is massive and centrally located in between the kitchen and family room,” Dodson says. “It’s meant to be a sophisticated showpiece that accommodates a crowd.”

To balance the vitality of the public spaces, the designer created livable respites in other rooms, especially in the private areas. The master suite offers a subtle palette that emits a sense of calm, and the two-story library is filled with shelves of beloved tomes and cozy chairs, encouraging one to linger with a good book. “We collect books, and we both love to read, so we wanted a big library,” Chen says.

Overall, the home sets itself apart with its unique mixture of styles—a special blend of formal and casual, private and open, modern and traditional that effortlessly flows throughout the design. Says Dodson, “It’s tailor-made to perfectly fit this family.”



The bedroom of the couple’s teenage daughter expresses her love for lavender. The chaise longue was a find from Joyce Horn Antiques. Opposite, top to bottom: In the kitchen, 14-foot natural wood ceilings are accented with beams and stand in contrast to the room’s main taupe-gray hue. Outdoors, a series of arches provides architectural interest.





"BECAUSE THE OWNERS TRAVEL AND WORK A LOT, THE MASTER SUITE NEEDED TO BE A TRUE RESPITE AND PLACE TO UNWIND."

—JULIE DODSON

The master suite is a series of rooms that lead one into another, from the more social lounge area (opposite) to the bedroom (above and top right), and finally to the bath (right). Accents of blush fill the spaces, including an abstract work by artist Mallory Page.