TIED TO TRADITION

BARBARA WESTBROOK AND HISTORICAL CONCEPTS TERRY PULANT FASHION AN ATLANTA HOME REFLECTIVE OF A GLOBE-TROTTING BROOK’S EUROPEAN HERITAGE

As a designer, I don’t want any room to feel too precious,” interior designer Barbara Westbrook says. "Today, I approach our projects with a more relaxed, casual attitude. There’s a sense of ease and comfort throughout the house."
WHEN A EUROPEAN COUPLE WHO SPEND their summers in southwest France relocated to Atlanta for the school year, they sought a timeless Buckhead dwelling that would reflect the family of five’s global inspirations, discriminating tastes and exacting specifications. Upon deciding to create such a place from scratch, there was only one architecture firm they trusted implicitly to do the job. Historical Concepts, after all, had fashioned their previous home in the California wine country some 20 years prior: “At the time, no one in the [California] area could design the house he wanted,” says Terry Pylant, the architectural designer who spearheaded the family’s Atlanta project. “He found our work in a magazine and commissioned us from there.”

Faithful to his firm’s reputation, Pylant delivered a structure with both presence and lightness. The family’s floor plan features no unnecessary hallways or corridors, facilitating seamless circulation throughout. Axial relationships between rooms—plus the interior and exterior spaces—are exceptionally strong, and because the house is only one room deep throughout, its rooms receive sunshine on both sides.

On the exterior, a mix of leaded-glass windows makes an equally sharp statement, while a simple roofline recalls Edwin Lutyens’ famed English designs and additional elements reference classical Philip Shutze structures nearby. “It is always important to us to create something that adds to the fabric of the setting, to look as though it has been there for decades and to stand the test of time,” Pylant says.

From the precisely set keystone at the entryway (flanked by flickering gas lanterns) to the handsomely engineered ceiling beams and balusters (the homeowner hand-selected the latter in a French foundry to punctuate the three-story staircase), the materials were just as important as the structure itself, says Historical Concepts’ Terry Pylant, who also notes the soft gray window trim and sashes.

As frequent entertainers, the homeowners relish having both casual and formal dining areas. The buffet was one of Westbrook’s finds from Provenance Antiques. “It’s important to add that layer of texture and character that enriches living in a space,” she says. The dining chairs are from Markdown Classic, and the iron chandelier is Paul Ferrante through Ainsworth-Noah.
A shining example of the house's striking architectural design is the kitchen, where traditional touches such as the transom windows above the door and the unfinished wood ceiling beams continue along a strong central axis. The barstools are Restoration Hardware, and the smoked-glass ceiling pendants are by Arteriors through Bungalow Classic.
residence is a concert of graceful architecture and impactful but well-edited accents.

Considering the balance of restraint and detail used for the home’s shell, it was essential that its interior design display complementary deftness. Pylant praises Barbara Westbrook, who signed on during the design development stage, as the “hero” of this project—a particular honor as it was her first collaboration with Historical Concepts.

Beyond her judicious manner of enhancing the neutral palette (outfitting the home with pale Belgian linen upholstery, for example), the designer also nudged the clients toward details they may not have been amenable to otherwise—such as soft plaster walls and the ornate motif on the library ceiling, which contributes a feminine moment to an otherwise masculine room.

“As we looked at historical photographs, we kept seeing these beautiful ceilings on houses of the past that the clients loved,” Westbrook recalls. “It was period details like these that ultimately gave the house its individuality and personality.”
On that note, Westbrook even accessorized the residence almost entirely with items the homeowners had collected along their travels—hand-tooled Moroccan silver; ivory-inlaid objets d’art; old books. “We set out their favorite things on folding tables, then selected and placed them,” she says, “rather than going out to buy everything anew.” The results are collected and instantly classic.

Historical Concepts was just as delighted with the outcome, seeing it as a showcase of sorts in their hometown. “After working on many national projects, it’s wonderful to have something of this caliber in our own backyard,” Pylant says. Considering the manicured landscape and pool pavilion, something tells us the homeowners share that sentiment. See Resources, below.

“The soft plaster walls have a slightly mottled effect, which adds more depth.”

Barbara Westbrook
The swimming pool is perhaps best enjoyed on a patio located by a bank of tall windows, which stands opposite the entryway and provides a sightline from the front door to the idyllic backyard, where landscape architects Hooten Land Design Inc. designed the grounds.