



Continental Classic

Long-buried architectural details are revived, lush color and luxurious furnishings are added, and a Boston apartment is reborn as a sumptuous sanctuary with an Old World feel.

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Imagination is the key. Have a good deal of it and no space stays ho-hum for long. Case in point: this spectacular Boston sanctuary. True, the first-floor unit boasted a garage and that most coveted city enticement, a private entrance, but before Boston interior designer Eugene Lawrence crossed the threshold, the home lacked spirit. A grim 1980 redo had buried many of the Back Bay apartment's



THIS PAGE: THE REGAL WINDOW TREATMENT INCLUDES HANDWOVEN SATIN BALLOON SHADES FROM OLD WORLD WEAVERS. FACING PAGE: BOSTON ARTIST SUSAN HARTER BASED THE WALL MURAL ON A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY TAPESTRY THE HOMEOWNERS ONCE SAW.



TOP RIGHT: ANTIQUE PIECES SUCH AS THE 1790 HERRON MINGLE WITH CUSTOM PIECES SUCH AS THE SUNG COFFEE TABLE. BOTTOM RIGHT: A MARCEL DUFY PAINTING GRACES THE ENTRY. FACING PAGE: THE CUPBOARD, PAINTED BY SUSAN HARTER, OPENS TO REVEAL A PASS-THROUGH TO THE KITCHEN.





nineteenth-century architectural details and left the place feeling disjointed and decidedly lackluster.

Lawrence saw the possibilities on his first visit. To recapture what had been lost, the designer called for a total gut, then skillfully composed a sumptuous new haven for his clients. "We saved old moldings where we could and replicated new ones, which we added along with features like pillars and pilasters," he explains. "Our goal was to redevelop the apartment in a classic European manner."

To that end, he also enhanced the original layout, removing a storage closet and relocating a powder room to make way for a bar at the very heart of the one-level plan. The bar showcases a hand-painted mural on canvas by Boston artist Susan Harter. Seen from every room, the enchanting mural—based on a seventeenth-century French tapestry the owners stumbled upon in their travels—depicts a hunting party traversing a green countryside. Lawrence and Harter painstakingly sanded the painting's surface to achieve a muted, time-worn look. But there's more: when the hosts open the doors to their corner liquor cabinet, another pastoral scene—this time of a post-hunt supper—is revealed. And then, of course, there's the floor: meticulously stained and antiqued to simulate inlaid parquetry.

Such luxe elements, along with a savvy gathering of furniture and lush color, cultivate a beguiling Old World elegance for today's lofty lair and visually expand the somewhat less than 2,000-square-foot interior. "When you fill each room with interesting things, your eye stops to take it all in before moving on," Lawrence says. "It's a great way of creating the illusion of more space."

A whiz at marrying pieces from disparate periods, Lawrence crisscrossed the country for a year, stopping in New Orleans and Santa Fe as well as New York and Connecticut to find the proper furnishings. The spacious living room reflects his confident style. Against a backdrop of sunny





THIS PAGE: THE SUMPTUOUS LIBRARY SPORTS AN ANTIQUE 1750 FRENCH TAPESTRY AS ITS CENTERPIECE. FACING PAGE TOP: A VAULTED CEILING ENHANCES THE HALLWAY'S VISUAL SPACE. BOTTOM: AN 1840 FRENCH CRYSTAL CHANDELIER ADDS DRAMA TO THE KITCHEN.



yellow glazed walls, Lawrence teams a chunky reproduction Asian-influenced coffee table, a dainty Louis VI stool and an elaborate eighteenth-century George III mirror. A small Gaveau grand piano circa 1922 and a pair of William Kent stools—matching treasures the designer was thrilled to uncover lying forgotten in an antique shop—share the setting, too.

The trick to Lawrence's skillful partnering is that no one object steals the limelight. Instead, the designer's compositions are harmonious studies aimed at pleasing all the senses. As he is the first to point out, a home is hollow if it's stocked merely for show. "I fashion my upholstered chairs several inches deeper than normal to make them more inviting," Lawrence says by way of example. "If you can't sit and relax, what do you have?"

Accordingly, the gleaming walnut and gilt table—a copy of a French mid-eighteenth-century design—in the dining area is surrounded by classic reproduction chairs. "Antique seats are much too wobbly," says Lawrence. "I normally save those kind for a hall." At night, silk café cur-

tains provide those gathered around the table privacy, while handwoven satin balloon shades above soften chilly sky vistas.

In a clever twist, a pretty cupboard, decoratively painted by Harter, stands at the living room's opposite end. Open the cupboard doors, though, and a pass-through to the kitchen is revealed. There, a restored French 1840 crystal chandelier and a French poster draw attention to a room designed to function as beautifully as it looks. A bounty of custom cabinets provides both storage and a polished, pulled-together air. As a pleasant surprise, occasional glass-front cabinets display a collection of antique pottery. "If you're going to have see-through cabinets," says Lawrence, "they should hold something beautiful."

Of course, it's no accident that the pottery's warm hue complements the kitchen's creamy palette. For cohesiveness, Lawrence also saw to it that the cabinet's finish would marry happily with the pale granite counters and custom mosaic backsplash.

A narrow hall fitted with a new vaulted ceiling leads to the library

and the owners' private domain. The sumptuous library sports an antique 1750 French tapestry as its centerpiece. The sofa is covered in a handwoven Jacobean tapestry in rich chocolate, teal and terracotta. Velvet covered chairs and a portly leather ottoman augmented with nail-head detailing step up the heady tone.

Equally captivating is the master bedroom. "It seems to be everyone's favorite room," says Lawrence. And why not? Floor to ceiling silk draperies and opulent Lawrence-designed bed coverings imbue the scene with quiet grandeur. Done up in dreamy hues of oyster, shrimp and cocoa, the sleeping area is serene without being cloying. A Louis XV mirror gazes at the scene from above one of the apartment's original mantels, which Lawrence had stripped and decoratively painted to complement the décor. A perfect chandelier interjects a subtle dash of jewel-like sparkle.

Life may roar beyond these confines, but within, all is beauty and order. Luxuriant and livable, this urban retreat leaves nothing to be desired. Except, perhaps, more time to enjoy the magic. **NEH**

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IN THE MASTER BEDROOM, A MATISSE LITHOGRAPH LOOKS OUT BETWEEN SILK-DRESSED WINDOWS. THE WOOD AND TOLE CHANDELIER WAS CUSTOM CARVED FOR THE ROOM.