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HAPPY MEDIUM

THANKS TO SOME DARING DESIGN SHIFTS, AN OLDER HOUSTON HOME BECOMES A STYLISH RESIDENCE THAT SPEAKS TO THE OWNERS' DIFFERING AESTHETICS.

WRITTEN BY LISA SKOLNIK / PHOTOGRAPHY BY TRIA GIOVAN

Right: Modifications gave this Houston home designed by Chandos Dodson Epley a new and entirely contemporary attitude. Sleek new balusters and an iron railing modernize the entry's winding staircase.

A table from Joyce Horn Antiques rests on reclaimed-oak plank floors from Custom Floors Unlimited.

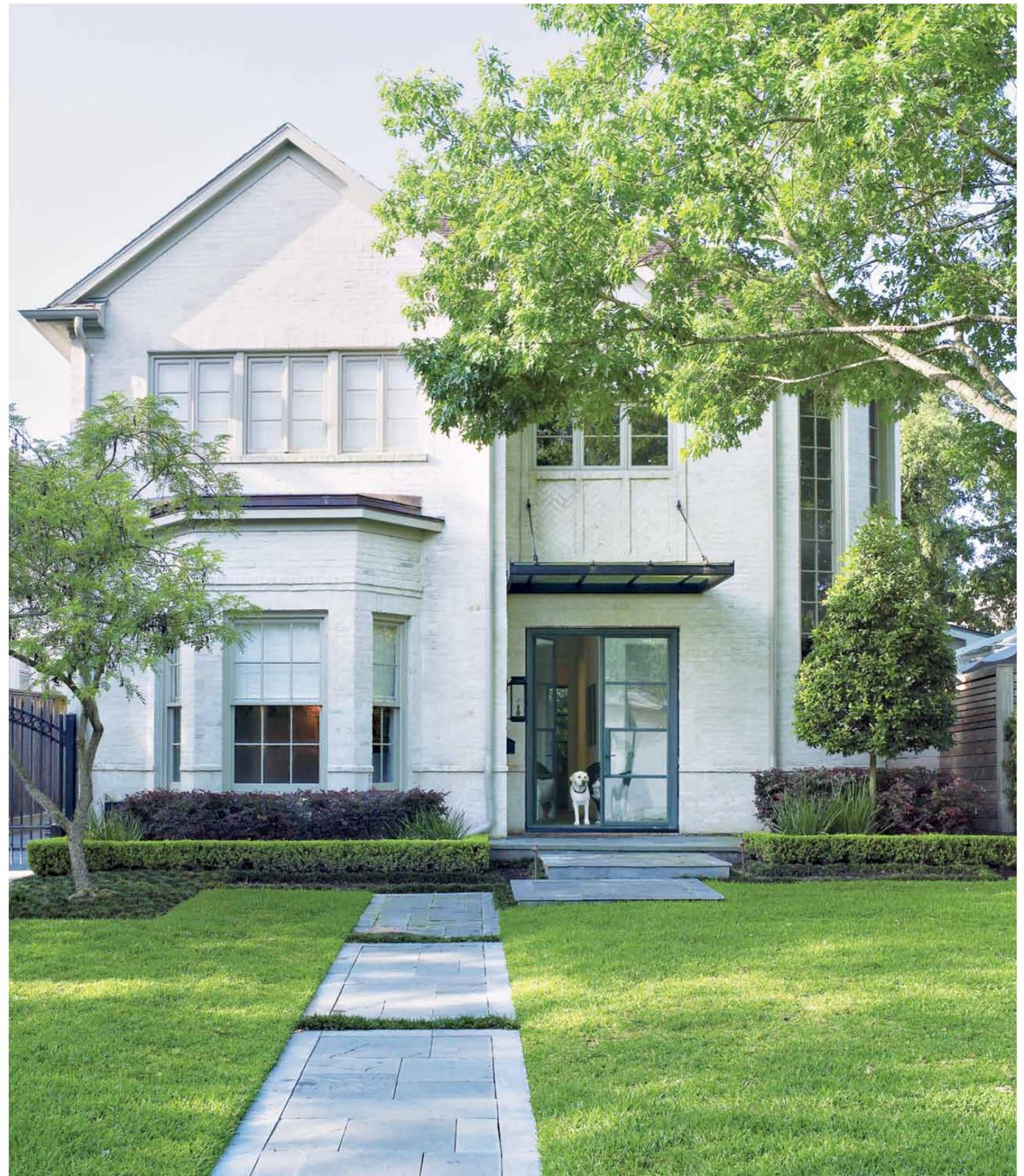
Opposite: A white mortar wash gives the traditional red brick exterior present-day appeal along with a new iron-and-glass door from Durango Doors. Landscape architect Andrew Somerville worked with the homeowners on the outdoor elements and chose plant material that fits the new style of the home.



From her distinctive name to her gutsy portfolio of design work, nothing about designer Chandos Dodson Epley is standard issue. As a matter of fact, it was Epley's remarkably varied range that made her the perfect match for Houston homeowners Marcie and Brian Peters, who were looking for a designer to help them revamp the Southside Place residence they bought 15 years ago. "It was a traditional home, but we wanted to give it some edge, and that's Chandos' forte," Marcie says. But more significantly, she adds, "Chandos is skilled at blending different styles and periods, and we needed that because we're total opposites. I like country French and Brian likes übermodern." Contradictory aesthetics aside, a second factor sealed the deal for the couple when choosing a designer: Epley's projects also reflect an exceptional level of customization and detail, and with four energetic

children and two large dogs, the Peterses had very specific requirements and wanted someone who could put durability, functionality and flexibility first yet still deliver wow-worthy decorative drama.

Having contemplated the project for quite some time, the couple had a good idea of what they wanted to do to make the home a more practical and rewarding space. They were able to purchase the lot next door about 10 years ago and expand their initially tiny yard, but the side of their home contiguous to the yard had no windows or access to the outdoors. And so, the owners hired architects Reagan Miller and Kevin Dahlstrand to help them correct these issues and update the interior layout. Then, once Epley came on board, the program expanded. "There was no way to give the home the kind of bright, airy, family-friendly spaces they wanted without taking it down to the studs," says Epley, who



A rough-hewn solid-zinc barn door, with hardware from Real Carriage Door Company in Gig Harbor, Washington, creates an industrial look in the family room. Its bold presence is tempered with a streamlined console fabricated by The Joseph Company. Above the console is a vibrant Julie Soefer photograph from the Barbara Davis Gallery.



worked on the project with builder Mark Rowe. By her estimation, they needed to update the layout, fenestrate the side of the house adjoining the added lot, minimize some of the existing architectural elements, and completely redo the kitchen.

For the Peterses, such an extensive renovation meant moving out of their home for almost a year. Brian was on board from the start, but Marcie needed convincing—finally realizing that the long-term rewards outweighed the short-term inconveniences. A decision to replace the floors with ultra-wide 200-year-old reclaimed oak planks—the most labor-intensive part of the project—was what sealed the deal. “We fell in love with these floors and couldn’t imagine anything else,” she says. With their rich, deeply distressed patina, the planks offered Marcie a nod to the warmth of country French and Brian an edgy decorative foil for the sleek look he wanted to embrace. But the floor’s resilience was the most significant factor for the couple. “The floor

dealer told me they’re impervious to cleats and claws—and she was right,” says Marcie.

Epley’s strategies to revamp the home also included altering the layout from formal to open and airy, shifting the home’s orientation to embrace the yard, and giving the space clean-lined architectural panache that would play to both of the Peterses’ proclivities. To achieve these feats, Epley enlarged the apertures between rooms; extended the family room by 10 feet and edged it with tall, broad glass-transom doors to bring in natural light; and stripped excess layers from baseboards, moldings and millwork. “Modifying the architecture made the house more streamlined,” Epley says. “Before, everything had been a little too heavy; the new details allowed the homeowners to go much more modern.”

The traditional red brick façade got equal treatment with a modern decorative makeover dreamed up by Brian. “I wanted to paint the exterior white, but Brian thought that would look too glossy and industrial,” Marcie says.

In the sitting area of the family room, a custom sofa covered in Holly Hunt Great Plains fabric joins custom chairs swathed in a Castel textile from David Sutherland; all were fabricated by The Joseph Company. James Dawson Design fabricated the custom coffee table, which rests on a rug from Creative Flooring Resources.



The lively dining room includes custom chairs conceived by Epley and upholstered in Larsen linen from Culp Associates; the chairs encircle a table fabricated by James Dawson Design. An Allan Knight & Associates chandelier, a wood-and-lacquer buffet from Mecox, exuberant hand-painted Porter Teleo wallpaper from David Sutherland and draperies using a Jim Thompson Fabrics textile are on view.

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-CHANDOS DODSON EPLEY

Sleek modern pieces anchor the family room's dining area, including an Arteriors chandelier that hovers above a table from Vieux Interiors and McGuire chairs from Ellouise Abbott. A white console from Longoria Collection resides under spools of thread, purchased at Found, that act as artwork.



Above and left: Pendants from Brown illuminate the kitchen above the island's Waterstone faucet and Julien sink, both from Westheimer Plumbing & Hardware. Router details on the slab door cabinets fabricated by Del Potosi Custom Cabinets are painted in Sherwin-Williams' Mindful Gray and sport nickel hardware. Janus et Cie barstools pull up to a Calacatta marble countertop from Cangelosi.

"Instead, he suggested we use a white mortar wash, which gave it character and texture but still streamlined our home's traditional silhouette." Epley furthered the effect by swapping the classic wood front door with an iron-and-glass number that mirrors those in the family room, while the architects topped it with a coordinating steel-and-glass awning. Now, the home's classic bones exude a fresh present-day demeanor.

Inside, Epley balanced a mix of modern materials, sumptuously textured fabrics and clean-lined yet transitional furnishings in neutral hues. Standard surfaces and finishes, for instance, were replaced with opulent options that are colorless yet laden with character and depth, such as the deeply veined Calacatta marble that clads the kitchen countertops or the zinc barn door that can slide into place to close off the family room from the formal areas. "I like to keep the big gestures neutral," Epley says.



When the homeowners purchased the lot next door to expand their yard, they were able to build a pool—envisioned by the husband, who worked with Somerville to build it. Sculptural Janus et Cie lounge chairs pair with stools from Area. The daybed and umbrella near the pool are also by Janus et Cie.



Above: In the master bedroom, a custom headboard in Holly Hunt Great Plains velvet was fabricated by The Joseph Company. Mirrors from David Duncan Antiques in New York add interest, while a Donghia chandelier brightens the space. Drapery fabric from ID Collection was fabricated by D&D Drapery Company.

Right: A spiraling agate chandelier from Ironies mimics the grand winding staircase in the entry, which includes a modern iron railing fabricated by General Iron. The Jonathan Browning Studios sconce was purchased at David Sutherland.

“That way, you can add color with smaller pieces and accessories, and replace them with something else when you’re ready for a change.” One vibrant item that won’t be going anywhere soon is the hand-painted wallpaper in the dining room, a move calculated to give the space unabashed glamour. “I’m a mechanical engineer, so I really went out on a limb with this element,” Marcie says. “But the wallpaper has given us great enjoyment and was well worth it.”

Today, the couple are equally enamored with the wallpaper and everything else about the house, and given that Brian is a sports agent who specializes in baseball, it is fitting how the owners feel about the results. “Chandos trod a really fine line between both our aesthetics, and it worked,” Marcie says. “She really hit a home run.”



Victoria + Albert's freestanding tub from Westheimer Plumbing & Hardware, featuring Dornbracht fixtures, takes advantage of the treetop views. Mosaic-glass tiles from Architectural Design Resource on one wall and Phillip Jeffries shagreen wallpaper from David Sutherland on the others heighten the feeling of bathing in a serene sanctuary.

