



regal bearing.

WRITTEN BY LIZ ARNOLD | PHOTOGRAPHY BY EMILY MINTON REDFIELD

YOU WOULD EXPECT THE HOME OF AN INTERIOR DESIGNER AND THE FOUNDER OF A LUXURIOUS CARPET COMPANY TO BE QUITE NICE—AMAZING, EVEN. But designer Michael Siller and Larry Hokanson, chairman of the board at his namesake carpet and rug enterprise, have taken their interiors to a palatial level.

The couple, both history buffs and Russian classicism enthusiasts, have downsized from their most recent residence, a replica of a Russian palace. But their new Houston house, an ornate Federal style by New York- and San Francisco-based architect John Ike, is furnished with a number of exquisite reproductions they hand selected for their previous home during several trips to St. Petersburg's State Hermitage Museum (which includes the Winter Palace), opinionated curator and translator in tow.

INTERIOR DESIGN Michael Siller, Michael J. Siller Interiors

ARCHITECTURE John Ike, Ike Kligerman Barkley Architects

HOME BUILDER Stephen Hann, Hann Builders

BEDROOMS 2 **BATHROOMS** 5 **SQUARE FEET** 5,000



MUSEUM QUALITY

A walnut table by Carl Akins in the sterling gray dining room beyond the entry features pecan inlay. Many pieces in the Houston residence are commissioned reproductions made by Russia's State Hermitage Museum.

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"They interviewed us for a period of two days to see if we were worthy of having the pieces made for us," recalls Hokanson, who explains that the restoration department's previous commission had been for the royal family in Sweden. "It was like adopting a child."

Ike had in mind a design based on the Derby Summer House in Massachusetts, a National Historic Landmark. Built by Samuel McIntire in 1794 with simple, elegant proportions, it is an example of classicism in America during the same movement in Russia. "It bears resemblance to other classical architecture of the period, like George Washington's Mount Vernon and Thomas Jefferson's Monticello," says Ike. The clients immediately approved. "We'd all worked together on their previous house," says builder Stephen Hann, "so we could say, 'Remember what we did over there? Let's do that here.'"





CZARRY NIGHT

Silver leaf dresses the upstairs living area. The bronze-and-malachite candlesticks are from Austria, and the gilded mahogany console is a commissioned replica, as is the handblown chandelier. The mantel's large round plate, a prized piece from the period of Alexander I, came from the Peterhof Palace in Russia.



ON GUARD

In homeowner Larry Hokanson's library, a mustard gold sofa was inspired by the color of Russian palaces; the chevron rug is custom by Hokanson. Draperies are by Schumacher and Beacon Hill; linen sheers by Duralee. The painting of the Russian guard was acquired in St. Petersburg.



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Configured like a town house, the residence features a simple floor plan, two rooms deep on both floors. The dining room doubles as a grand entrance; the kitchen and a guest bedroom are also on the ground level; and the main rooms upstairs are in the style of *piano nobile*, with both stairs and an elevator connecting the floors. Thanks to the arrangement, says Siller, “Not only do we get spectacular views of the property, but we ended up with 15-foot ceilings.”

Such stately spaces serve as livable showrooms for the furnishings. In the living room, for example, where neoclassic references mix with French Regency and Art Deco beneath 16-inch-deep classic crown moldings, a pair of fauteuils found in France face an antique Russian settee. Although the custom carpets throughout are Hokanson—naturally—the one here particularly stands out: Every element in its ornate design is taken from

WOOD SHOP

The bronze-doré chandelier with hand-blown ruby glass is one of three created by the State Hermitage Museum. The library's glass is emerald; the living area's cobalt. Hand-carved gilded doors are exact replicas made from five types of wood.



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a Russian ceiling. "I have thousands of pictures of them," says Hokanson. Shades of platinum, silver and gray, explains Siller, "give the antique period furniture an updated feeling." A contemporary palette refreshes the look of the entire residence.

One modern addendum to the home's original inspiration is the inclusion of two studies, one for each of the men, above the detached garage and accessible by bridges. Hokanson's, a library filled with history books and biographies, is octagonal; Siller's, a Zen-like sitting room, is an ellipse. "They fit our personalities," says Siller, while Ike notes that "they draw on classical themes like formal shapes."

When it came to the reproductions, the Hermitage stipulated that the proportions and materials had to exactly match the originals, so that only two of a kind existed in the world. During the couple's trips to Russia, they could see their replicas being crafted: a mahogany console with cast-bronze eagles first designed for Nicholas I in 1840; dining room

METAL WORKER

Designer and homeowner Michael Siller prefers the simplicity of a white kitchen. Stainless steel Kenmore Pro appliances complement an antique wood farm table and dove gray chairs by Crate & Barrel. The ceiling light fixture is by Visual Comfort.



SECOND SERVING

Plates on the solarium wall are from an original collection of 16,000 pieces from 1820, part of a Russian dowry. Dove-and-ecru plaid fabric by Marvic covers antique French furniture. The birch tree-print wallpaper was found in a shop called the Paint Bucket in Wisconsin.



PLATINUM HIT

A custom chinoiserie tea table by Michael Taylor adds curves to the living room's classical lines. The large Art Deco painting above the sofa, acquired through Sotheby's, is by Dutch artist Emile van der Cammen.



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doors made from five species of wood, hand-carved and with gilded elements; and three chandeliers modeled after originals designed in 1820, with handblown colored glass. Everything, that is, except the 12 dining room chairs, also from 1820, made for Alexander I. When Siller and Hokanson inquired, they were told the wood, carillion birch, was unavailable, so restorers had to source from a forest. "Those," the workers said, pointing at a pile of lumber, "are your chairs." The white and gilded chairs dressed in platinum silk now reside in the couple's marble-floored dining room, where they line the sterling gray wall, as in a palace.

"We call it democratic grandeur," Hokanson says of the new residence. Others may call it the reign of Hokanson and Siller. **L**

PEACEFUL RULE

A portrait of Russian Princess Zinaida Nikolaevna Yusupova presides over the master bedroom, where Pratesi linens dress the bed and the duvet is made from a Kravet silk and a Schumacher velvet.