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A DESIGNER INJECTS A PARISIAN SENSIBILITY INTO HER OWN CHICAGO HOME WITH CHIC FURNISHINGS AND SOFT POPS OF COLOR.

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INTERIOR DESIGN / WENDY LABRUM, WENDY LABRUM INTERIORS  
HOME BUILDER / ABEL MARIN, PRO-DONE RENOVATION CORP.

In the entry of designer Wendy Labrum's Chicago home, the walls are covered with hand-painted silk wallpaper from de Gournay in New York. A vintage French stool from Modern Drama pulls up to a mirrored console designed by Labrum. The vintage French mirror is from Jayson Home and the lamp is from Circa Lighting.



Designer and self-professed Francophile Wendy Labrum doesn't have to go very far to get her Paris fix. In fact, she doesn't even have to leave the house. That's because Labrum's home, a classical-style residence in Bucktown she and her husband, Brandon, recently purchased and renovated, displays dramatic arrangements of both vintage and contemporary French furnishings that—like the effortlessly chic and iconic way French women dress—are as casual as they are sophisticated and as edgy as they are timeless. "I believe that good design will always be influenced by French design," Wendy says. "Probably because they've been doing it longer."

Wendy, Brandon and their young daughter had previously been living in a condominium near Wrigley Field when they decided a change of scenery was needed. "We knew our family was going to keep growing and that we'd eventually need more space," says Brandon. And

the five-bedroom house they ended up moving into met all of their current and future requirements. For example, the couple, who now have three young children, can easily access the area's vibrant offerings. "It's a great walking neighborhood and has a bit of a New York SoHo feel," Brandon says. "Plus, it's family-friendly yet still provides great nightlife, restaurant and shopping options."

The house offered another convenience, too: simple architecture. "It was a blank canvas," Wendy says. "I was able to add architectural elements and create spaces with personality." In many of the rooms, Wendy designed cased entries, as well as built-in bookshelves for the family room. "I heightened all of the doorways to add drama and incorporated panel molding throughout," she says. "I love pre-war millwork and wanted to give the house character."

In the kitchen, Wendy started from scratch. "I completely gutted it," says the designer, who replaced a window that previously looked to the neighbor's house with solid wall

The living room features a Reagan Hayes-designed sofa with a Bergamo Fabrics textile from Donghia, French stools upholstered in leopard print by Kravet and a vintage armchair dressed in a Rose Cumming striped silk from Dessin Fournir. Antique Maison Baguès floor lamps and a Lucite-and-brass coffee table complete the scene.

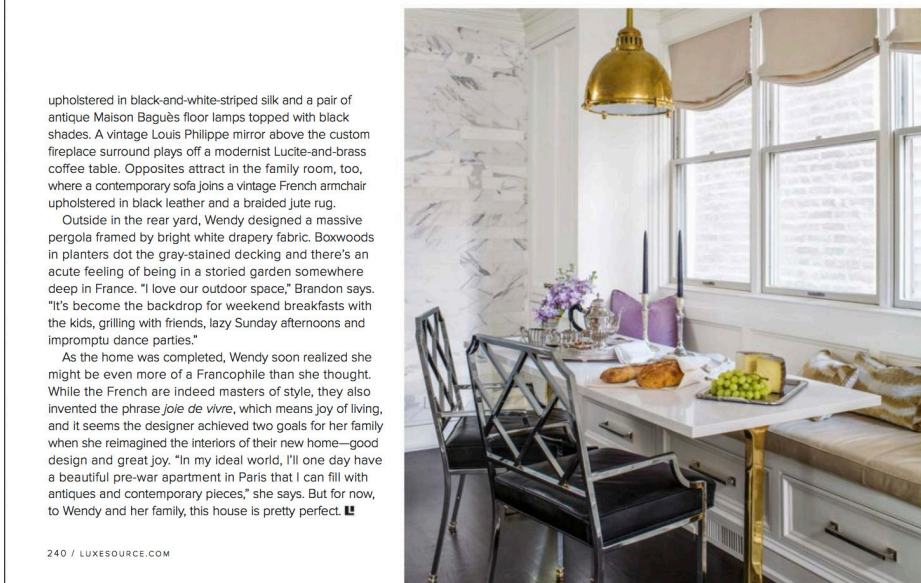
In the dining room, square-back leather Oly chairs mingle with circle-back vintage Louis-style chairs from 1800s that are covered with Manuel Carnevas striped silk from Cowtan & Tout. A vintage Marie Therese chandelier hangs above an existing table; the silk drapery fabric is by Rose Cumming from Dessin Fournir.

space, which now displays upper cabinetry and a hood. "There was plenty of natural light without that window," she says. "Closing it up allowed me to have a larger island and a bigger range." Wendy also designed a built-in banquette for the breakfast area and covered an adjacent wall with Calacatta marble tile. "Everything we installed was top-notch," says general contractor Abel Marin. "Wendy's design made the house so inviting. You walk in and it feels like home."

For however fine the furnishings are, they're also relaxed. It's a dichotomy that's not easily achieved and a concept that makes both the French style and Wendy's design so successful. "I love glamour," she says. "But the home also had to be livable." Therefore, the designer covered a chesterfield in the media room with treated ivory leather that can be easily wiped clean and upholstered two vintage Louis-style chairs in the living room with charcoal cotton-velvet. "Velvet is durable," she says. "I chose fabrics that look gorgeous but can also handle wear and tear." In the entry, a vintage French stool features a black leather-covered seat cushion. "My kids sit on that stool to put their shoes on," Wendy says. "The leather is original, but it's weathered so I don't have to worry about it." In addition, much of the furniture that isn't vintage was custom-made for comfort and to accommodate the entire family. For example, because Brandon is 6 feet 5 inches tall, deep sofas were needed. "I wanted pieces with the right shapes and scales," says Wendy of the custom furnishings.

Throughout the design, lighter colors are tempered with splashes of black, smooth and soft textures mingle near more rustic ones, and the historical French furniture—some of which she had shipped directly from Paris—keeps good company with notable contemporary pieces. "I love mixing periods and blending old with new," Wendy says. "It makes a home feel well-collected and the contrasting of the colors and textures gives a room individuality." In the living room, Wendy offset a contemporary sofa covered in lavender cotton-sateen with a vintage chair





upholstered in black-and-white-striped silk and a pair of antique Maison Baguès floor lamps topped with black shades. A vintage Louis Philippe mirror above the custom fireplace surround plays off a modernist Lucite-and-brass coffee table. Opposites attract in the family room, too, where a contemporary sofa joins a vintage French armchair upholstered in black leather and a braided jute rug.

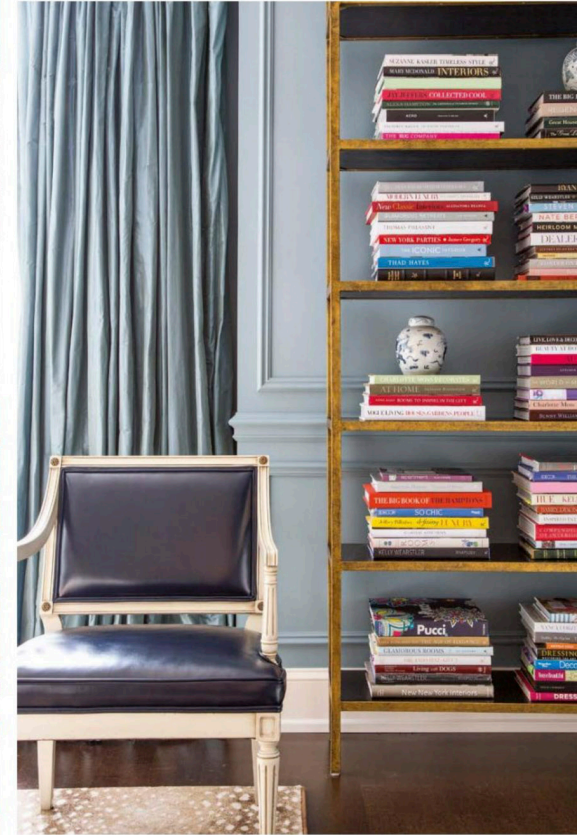
Outside in the rear yard, Wendy designed a massive pergola framed by bright white drapery fabric. Boxwoods in planters dot the gray-stained decking and there's an acute feeling of being in a storied garden somewhere deep in France. "I love our outdoor space," Brandon says. "It's become the backdrop for weekend breakfasts with the kids, grilling with friends, lazy Sunday afternoons and impromptu dance parties."

As the home was completed, Wendy soon realized she might be even more of a Francophile than she thought. While the French are indeed masters of style, they also invented the phrase *joie de vivre*, which means joy of living, and it seems the designer achieved two goals for her family when she reimagined the interiors of their new home—good design and great joy. "In my ideal world, I'll one day have a beautiful pre-war apartment in Paris that I can fill with antiques and contemporary pieces," she says. But for now, to Wendy and her family, this house is pretty perfect. ■

**Left:** For the butler's pantry, Labrum customized white cabinetry with polished-nickel hardware from Katoanah Architectural Hardware. The coordinating marble countertop was purchased through Terrazzo & Marble Supply Companies.

**Opposite, top:** A Visual Comfort chandelier from Circa Lighting hangs in the kitchen, where custom stools from Thomas Hayes Gallery in Hollywood, California, are clad in Jerry Pair leather from David Sutherland. Appliances are from Abt and the tile backsplash is by Ann Sacks. A Rohl faucet adds shine.

**Opposite, bottom:** The breakfast area features a marble tile-covered wall and a built-in bench for seating. A pendant from Urban Archaeology suspends above a Labrum-designed table and vintage Milo Baughman chairs covered in an Edelman Leather material. Window treatments were fashioned with Fabricut linen.



**Above:** Labrum selected Benjamin Moore's Jamestown Blue paint for the walls and blue silk Vervain drapery fabric from Fabricut for the windows of the media room. A vintage armchair upholstered in navy leather from Edelman Leather sits beside a brass-accented bookshelf.

**Left:** The media room features a vintage Louis Philippe mirror and an Ivory Labrum-designed sofa upholstered in a material from Edelman Leather; a second custom sofa by Labrum is covered with linen-velvet from Fabricut. A vintage brass Mastercraft coffee table and sheepskin-topped ottoman from Bradley rest on a Stark rug.

A bed designed by Labrum is swathed in Great Plains linen-velvet from Holly Hunt and covered with bedding by Leontine Linens in the master bedroom. Antique mirrored dressers from Bungalow 5 in New York and a vintage Venini chandelier, purchased through 1stciobis, lend elegance.



Below, left: Whimsical paper from Romo covers the walls of the powder room, giving the space a playful and feminine feel. An Oly mirror hangs above a marble countertop from Terrazzo & Marble Supply Companies, with legs from Urban Archaeology. Newport Brass fixtures complete the look.



Below, right: In the master bedroom's sitting area, vintage chairs designed by Milo Baughman are upholstered with a Pierre Frey linen-velvet from Holly Hunt and flank an Oly ottoman. A custom silver silk carpet by Labrum, fabricated by Direct Rug Import, plays off silver silk draperies from Fabricut.

