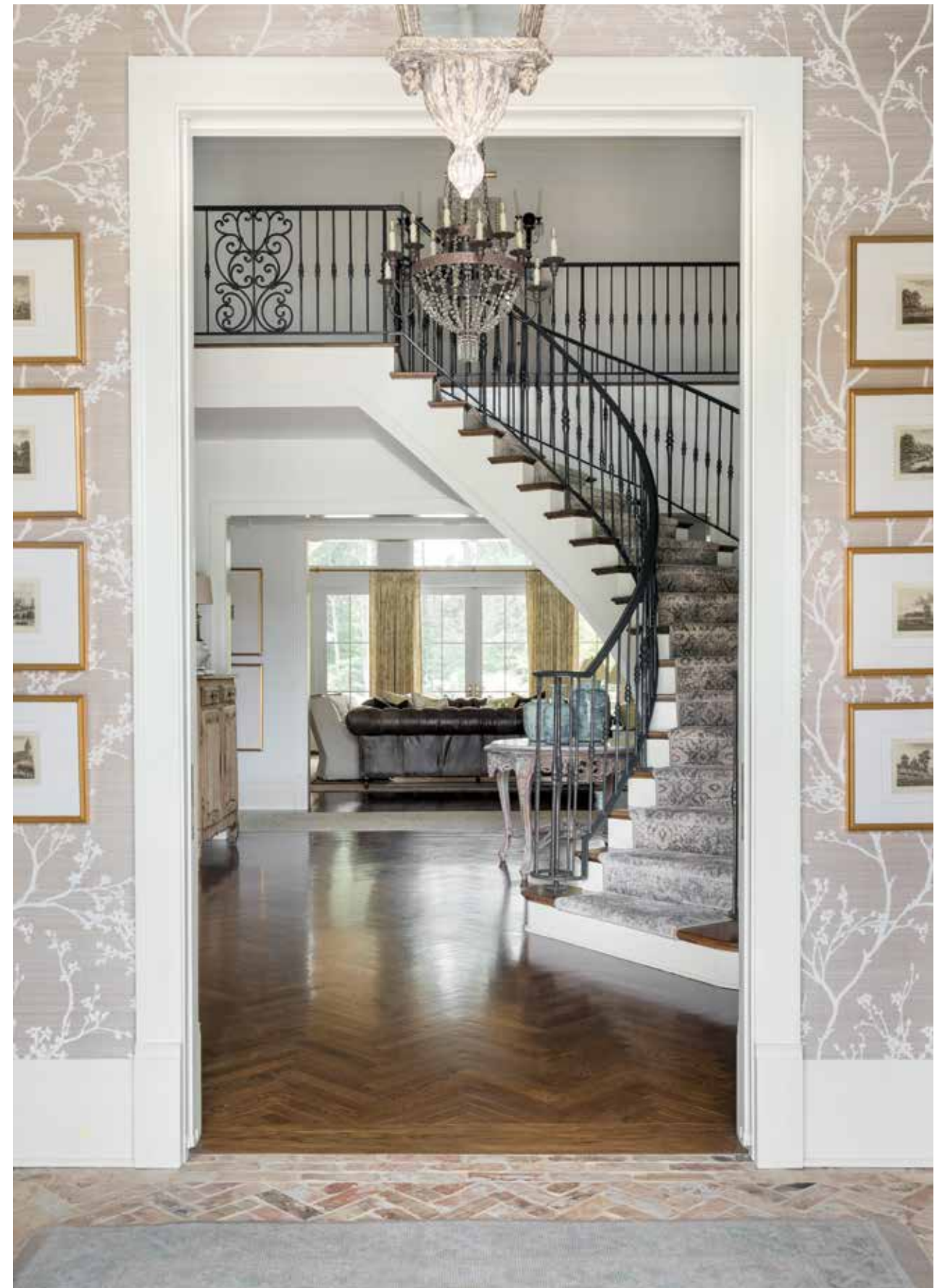


A Southern Chateau

Subtle sophistication meets cozy comfort in this new build filled with Old-World charm.





For Sharon and Gary Avants, the Chateau-inspired new build in Athens, Georgia, was designed to be their forever home—and with a long list of enchanting architectural details, it certainly fit the bill. But once the contractor's work was finished, it became clear they were going to need a bit more help.

"Once they had it complete, they realized that they didn't really have anything to put in the house," says Grace Brackman of Maggie Griffin Design. "So, they called me." The architecture of the home, she says, led the design, and though material choices like hardwood and limestone lent warmth, the neutral walls left things feeling stark.

"It just kind of started with layering," Grace adds. A heavy use of draperies, rugs, and other soft furnishings led the way in infusing the house with the homey spirit the Avantses were looking for. Patterned grass cloth wallpapers, layered rugs, and antique pieces set atop existing details like herringbone floors and rough-cut stone struck the balance between sophistication and practicality.

"It was fun to balance between using the French antiques and then also items that people weren't afraid to sit on and enjoy," Grace says. Alongside pastoral paintings picked up on the Avantses' travels, leather sofas and wingback chairs with caning offer stylish but comfortable spots to sit. And Grace's fabric selections—including damask prints on slubby linen, rather than something more untouchable—display the approachability that softens the home's elegant side.

ABOVE LEFT: In the vestibule that precedes the foyer, a painted antique chest was chosen as a complement to the grass cloth wallpaper and the sepia-toned prints featuring English castles. "So, we were able to keep things in a very neutral palette, but by bringing in all the different textures in the same color tones, it gave that warmth that we were looking for," Grace says.



A bleached oak cabinet in the entry sits beneath a painting of South Georgia pine trees. Grace notes that she "formalized the piece" with a pair of barley twist candlestick lamps with a gilded finish.



"[The Avantses] are big travelers, and they're big into art," Grace says, adding that her job was to find a home for many of the pieces they already owned.

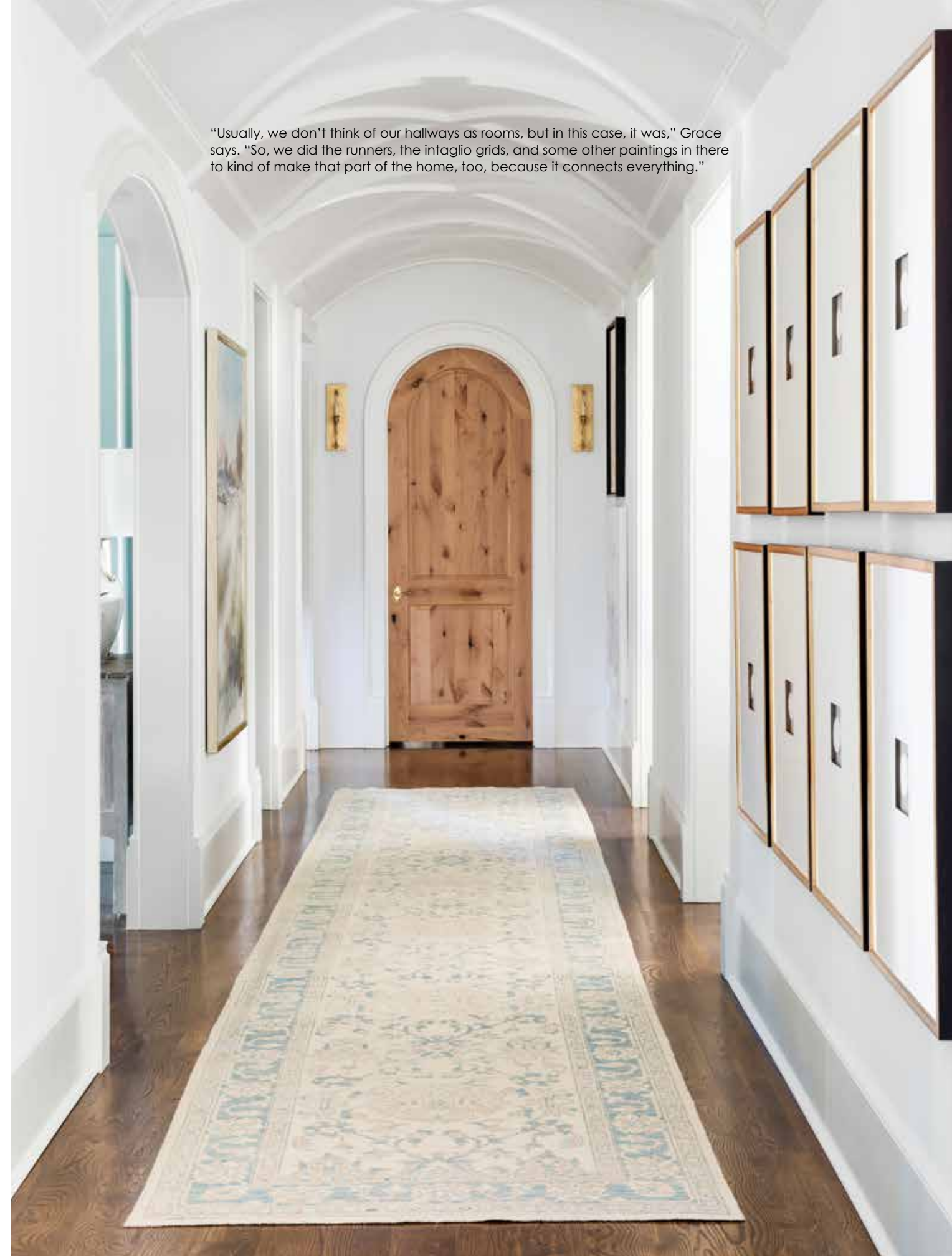
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In addition to caned furniture, the designer points to bleached oak as a must-have for European-inspired spaces. “You get that same kind of French look, but it doesn’t have the heaviness of a walnut or a hickory stain,” she explains. The technique pops up in the great room coffee table and the doors throughout the home—including the pantry door that spills warmth into the black-and-white palette.

The dining room employs a brighter hue, though Grace balances the effect with a touch of Old-World charm in the form of sunburst mirrors and a crystal chandelier. “I think the lines of the side chairs are very feminine and delicate, and they kind of remind me of that more formal French look,” she says. The buffalo check on the host chairs, however, pulls in a touch of the countryside, returning to the comfortable refinement that was paramount in the design.





"Usually, we don't think of our hallways as rooms, but in this case, it was," Grace says. "So, we did the runners, the intaglio grids, and some other paintings in there to kind of make that part of the home, too, because it connects everything."



The iconic caning makes a return in the bedroom, creating a rich foundation for a room that swims in serene hues. Grace mixed and matched floral patterns on the bed, creating a depth of texture without overwhelming the space thanks to neutral shades paired with splashes of yellow. While aged character shows up in the form of a found architectural remnant and a grid of antique botanicals, a closer look reveals touches of the contemporary, with modern bedside lamps and a small-scale leopard print on the bench.

But the real getaway for the Avantses is a study that veers from the rest of the home in terms of both atmosphere and inspiration, as the space takes its cues from the continent of Africa—their favorite destination and the site of their humanitarian work. “When I was speaking with them at our first meeting, Sharon said that was her dream: to have a spot where she could go, and it would remind her of her favorite place,” Grace says.

Despite its deviation from the softer atmosphere throughout the project, the space remains true to the home in its personalized design that blends sophistication with comfort. Through a thoughtful selection of materials and a mindfulness of the existing architecture, Grace filled this abode with a spirit that incorporates the memories of the Avantses’ travels abroad while making sure they always feel at home. ✨

TEXT BY BETHANY ADAMS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT PETERSON

Grass cloth wallpaper, fern-patterned Schumacher drapes, and a green velvet sofa are just a few of the elements that make the study stand out, while warm woods, aged leather, and touches of chinoiserie call back to the spirit found elsewhere in the home.

