

TRADITIONAL HOME[®]

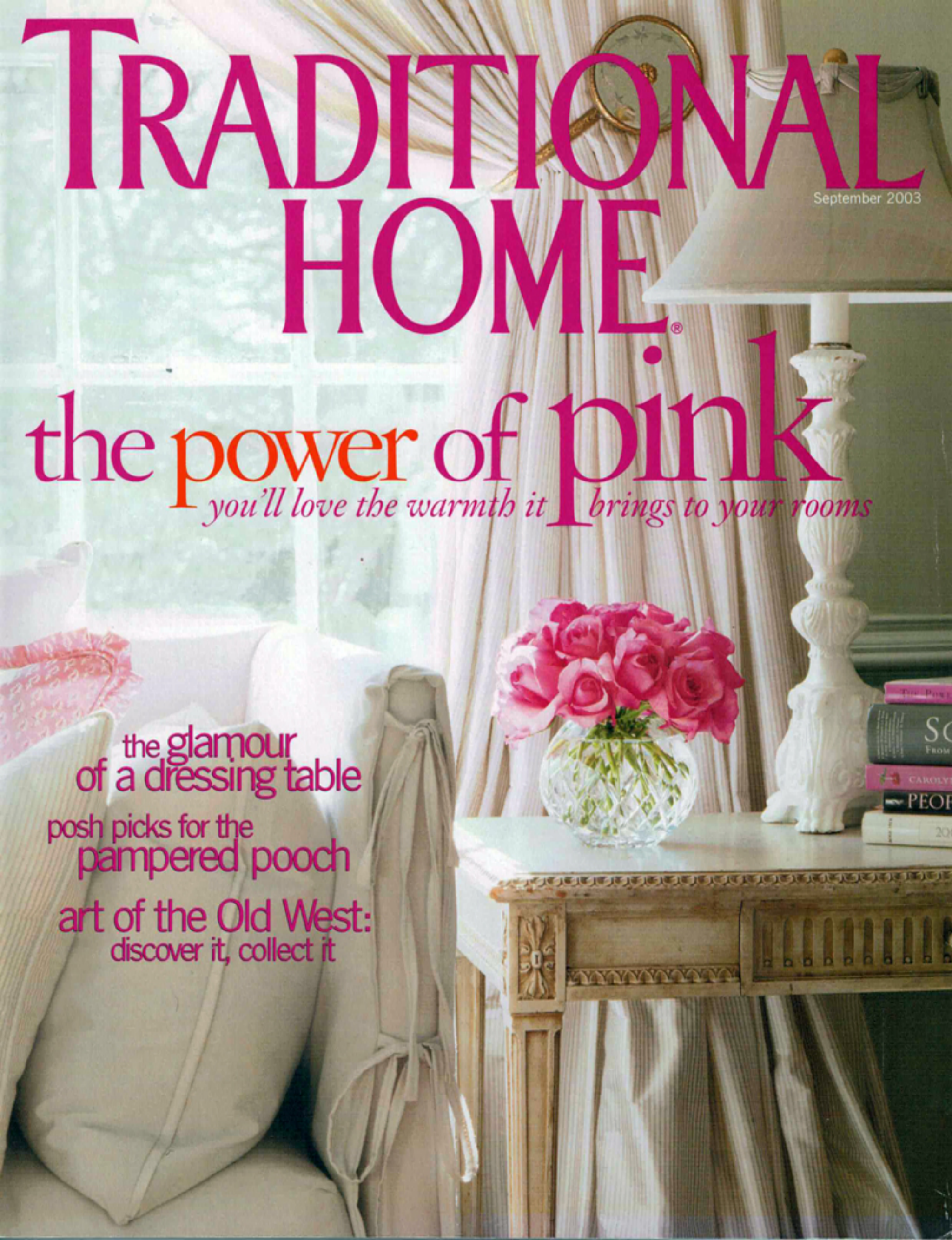
September 2003

the power of pink
— you'll love the warmth it brings to your rooms

the glamour
of a dressing table

posh picks for the
pampered pooch

art of the Old West:
discover it, collect it





pretty in pink

BEFORE PINK BECAME A FASHION TREND, IT WAS LAURA VALENTINE'S FAVORITE COLOR, NATURALLY.

BY CANDACE ORD MANROE PHOTOGRAPHY BY GORDON BEALL PRODUCED BY EILEEN DEYMIER



For shimmer, designer Suellen Gregory mirrored French doors between the living room and an unused sunporch. A pair of 19th-century gilded, marble-topped French tables flanks the fireplace. The mantel's line drawing is by the late Teresa Pollock. Opposite: A bouquet in an old sterling basket reflects Laura Valentine's love of roses.

When Laura and Ned Valentine bought their Georgian-style brick house, it was typical of the stately Richmond, Virginia, homes that had suffered benign neglect for the past 50 years: It was dark and dated but rich in possibilities. Laura, who had cultivated an eye for style from her sophisticated mother, focused on the positive. Her vision for the house's potential would resolve the rest.

"The key word in Laura's vision was 'pretty,'" says designer Suellen Gregory, who became friends with Laura some 10 years ago, when she came into Gregory's retail shop/design studio to buy fabric. "She was a young newlywed, and her husband was in graduate school, but I knew right away that she had a wonderful eye," Gregory recalls. "She automatically gravitated to the finest fabrics I had."

A friendship ensued. So a few years later, when the Valentines bought the vintage Georgian for their growing family, they called Gregory for help with the design. "Laura's great fun to work with because she knows exactly what she wants, but as a busy mom, she doesn't have a lot of time to do it all herself," says Gregory.

For Laura, knowing her mind means brooking no vague ideas or wishy-washy generalizations. Instead, she pinpoints her desires so precisely that there's no chance of ambiguity or misunderstanding. For example, rather than simply stating her color preferences, she provides recipes for them, describing their tones and shades complete with the proportions of other colors present in each one.

"Her favorite color is pink," says Gregory, "but she's very particular about its shade. It has to be a blue-pink, and it can't go to salmon or to raspberry." The two beautiful pink stripe silk fabrics that cover a chair and ottoman in the living room both fall into Laura's prescribed tonal range, as do the mix of pillows on the sofa and the skirt on an end table. The pale pink dining room curtains—so light as to be almost imperceptibly tinted—are also the blue-pink shade Laura favors. It took some searching for Gregory to locate the right color—and she never did, at least among drapery fabrics.

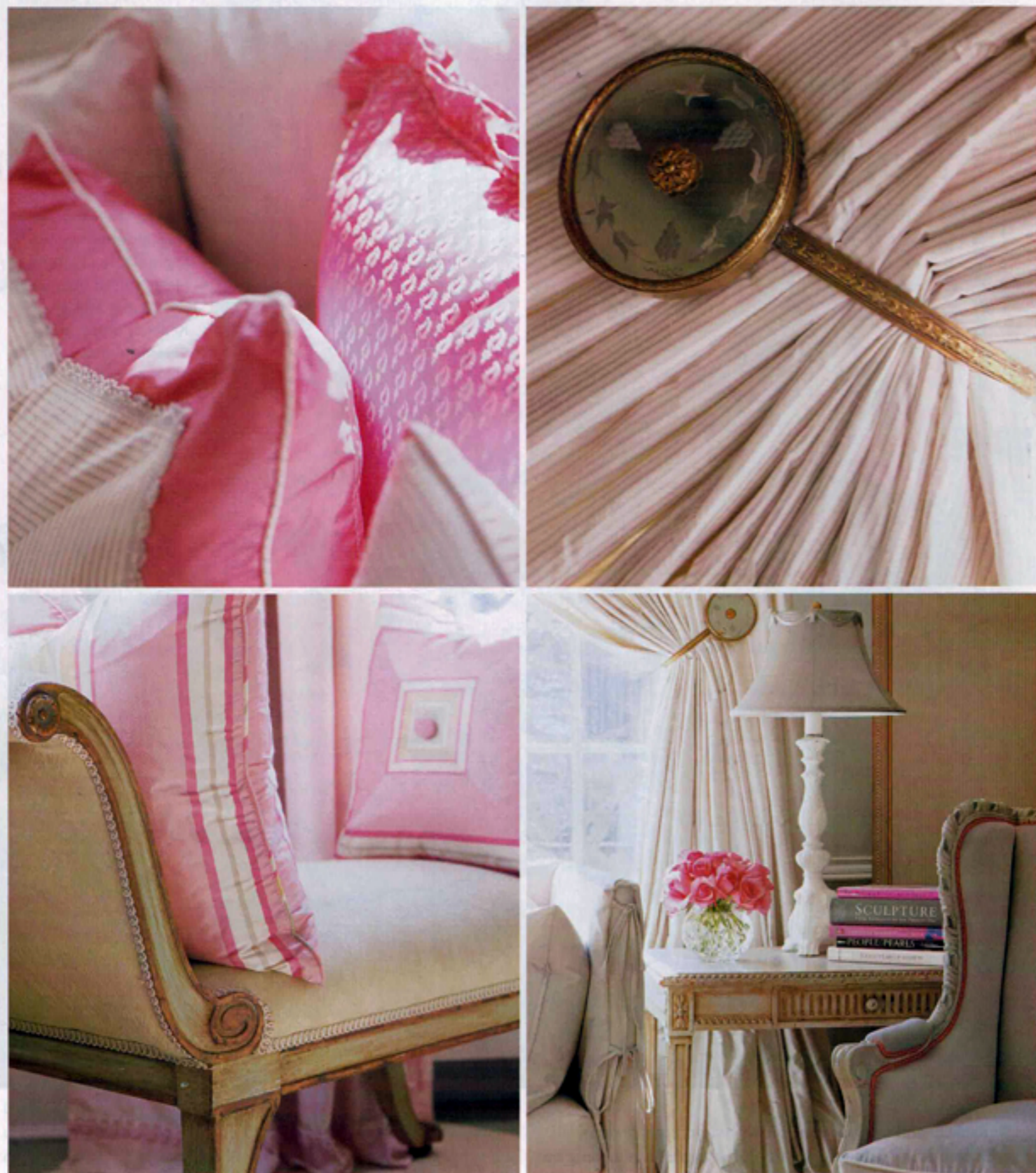


The living room's silk-covered sofa is accented with pillows in miter-edged pink fabric, the homeowner's favorite color. The antique trumeau's large scale makes it the focal point. **Below:** Gregory dressed the living room windows in "an ordinary cream-colored silk" rendered elegant with acanthus-leaf finials and buttoned pleats copied from the bodice of a Jackie Kennedy dress. **Opposite:** A portrait of the homeowners' son, Ned, hangs above a 19th-century Italian chest in the living room.

"I looked and looked and finally went with a dress silk, because I couldn't find the right color. I found it at a remnant store in Washington, D.C. It had been a special order, possibly for a wedding, that someone had never picked up."

Laura's passion for pink dates to her childhood. "I have a strong attachment to the color pink because I grew up surrounded by it," she says. "My mother wore it, and she used it in her house and her garden." Laura's mother, notes Gregory in an aside, is "an absolutely beautiful, extremely stylish" person that any younger woman would be proud to emulate. Her





Opposite: Shirred pink panels frame the dining room windows in understated elegance. The painted floor prevents the space from becoming too sweet—a danger whenever a “pretty” style is employed. Extra sparkle comes from the mirrored backsplash in the butler’s pantry.

Clockwise from top left: Gregory’s skill at mixing fabrics shows in a collection of pink pillows that range from a paisley pattern trimmed with traditional ruffles to paneled, miter-edged squares with accent welting. ■ One of Gregory’s best finds, antique mirrored tiebacks add a touch of whimsy to the family room’s silk striped curtain panels. ■ The family room’s antique chair is covered in a soft gray cotton velvet outlined with pink gimp. ■ The dining room’s antique gilt-and-paint French settee is covered in a woven neutral that’s given a pop of color with silk pillows.





Opposite: The entry hall leads to the back of the house. An antique crystal chandelier, a marble-topped 19th-century French table, ornate architectural salvage, and button-back slipcovered side chairs introduce the pretty theme that prevails throughout the house.

Right: Avocado green when it was purchased, the antique settee's original gray paint was serendipitously revealed with a little sandpaper. Gray silk portieres sweep to the floor between two sections of the vestibule.

Below: The Valentine home is an example of classic Georgian-style architecture.



influence on her own daughter was inevitable. Like her mother, Laura is a zealous rose gardener. "Pink is the color of my favorite roses, which are 'Perfume Delight,' 'Ultimate Pink,' and 'Pink Peace,'" she says. Because she grows her own roses, Laura is adamant that they be the only flowers in her rooms. There are no floral fabrics in the house, so solids, stripes, and other patterns fill in the void, giving the pink palette an unexpectedly fresh look.

The reliance on geometrics begins in the entry hall, where Gregory painted the floor an oversize diamond pattern in gray

and white. "One of the first things that impressed Laura about the house was how, in the true manner of Georgian architecture, you could see all the way through to the back of the house from the entry," says Gregory. "My goal with the floor was to draw the eye all the way back."

Not just any gray would do for the stenciled flooring. "It had to be a cool gray, not too dark, and it couldn't be a blue-gray," says Gregory. That same cool gray is picked up on the entry hall stairs, which are carpeted in a pale gray wool that's trimmed at the sides in matching gray leather. "To get this color

I THINK GOOD DESIGN IS ABOUT BEING
PRETTY WHILE STILL FUNCTIONING WELL.
—DESIGNER SUELLEN GREGORY

and binding treatment, we had to order the leather by the skin and then cut it into strips," Gregory notes. Silk portieres between sections of the entry hall and silk slipcovers so feminine they look like ball gowns sprinkle the cool gray throughout the vestibule.

The color continues into the dining room (just off the entry) with the same gray-and-white diamond-pattern flooring. "I just wanted to give that room a little more dimension," says Gregory, and the geometric stencil was a more interesting alternative than an area rug. The designer had the dining room walls painted an extra-cool gray, even lighter than the floor, then had them faux-paneled with accents of gold leaf and white paint for the look Laura loves.

Just as her grays have to shy away from blue, the creams in Laura's palette can't betray a trace of yellow. "The sisal area rug in the master bedroom was hard to find because it needed to be the color of sand," Gregory explains. Walls in the living room are subtle, 14-inch-wide stripes painted linen-white and flesh color—again, without any yellow tint.

For accessories, Laura and Gregory relaxed their stringent color standard for gray, leaning toward a French gray, which is heavier on the blue. A French-gray piece of architectural salvage rimmed in gold leaf tops the doorway leading from the first section of the entry to the next, dramatizing the approach. In the living room, a French-blue trumeau behind the sofa not only was acceptable but desirable as an eye-pleasing companion to the blue-pinks on the sofa pillows and other fabrics.

"The trumeau is an antique from a local dealer. It has a large scale that a lot of people would be afraid to use—it actually



begins a little below the back of the sofa and rises all the way to the ceiling. But Laura wasn't intimidated. We both found it very dramatic," Gregory says. Laura is fond of French furniture's curves and painted finishes. "She likes a light, pretty look that's extremely well-defined," says Gregory. "Even for the kitchen, she wasn't concerned about staying on top of the trends with granite countertops or industrial stainless-steel appliances. She simply wanted the room to be pretty."

Thus furnishings throughout the house are a combination of antiques and old reproductions. The dining room table and



In the master bedroom, the antique French bed is topped with a white matelassé spread and a pale French-blue silk duvet cover. Below: The antique chandelier is painted white with gilded trim. Opposite: Daughter Laura's room features a custom dressing table.

chairs, as well as the living room's coffee table, are old reproductions of French antiques. The bed in the master bedroom is an antique French upholstered piece, and the crystal sconces and chandeliers are also old.

"My typical approach is that I want a client's house to look like their house, not mine," says Gregory. "My pride in this house is that it looks like Laura. It's a reflection of her style, and her favorite colors and antiques. That's why it's a success."

Interior designer: Suellen Gregory

For more information, see the Reader's Resource on page 194.

