

# EAST MEETS SOUTHWEST

*How a very Santa Fe home welcomed an Asian design*

BY JANE AUSTER / PHOTOS: ROY TIMM

DESIGN  
Autumn 2013

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HOW DO YOU INTRODUCE A BIT OF ASIAN DESIGN to a house originally designed with Santa Fe in mind? This was the challenge facing Regina Sturrock as she contemplated a complete “personalization” of a 6,000-square-foot home in Southwestern Ontario.

The original home felt very themed inside. The new owners sought to downplay the Southwest and bring the East into the mix, capturing elements of their trips throughout Eastern Asia and Bali and creating a tranquil environment.

“They wanted to have the design based on a spiritual platform. Their home was to be a welcoming sanctuary that would feed the soul, enliven the senses, encourage reflection and, most importantly, foster the happiness and well-being of their four children,” says Sturrock, principal designer for this project. “We took inspiration from the many images from their travels, knowing that the clean lines and serene aesthetic of Eastern tradition would marry well with the organic forms and simple masses of the architecture.”



Both the exterior and interior of the home originally bore all the hallmarks of Southwest architecture with its sweeping sculptural mass, rounded corners, vaulted ceilings, stuccoed walls, rough-hewn trusses, beams and grille work.

“The interior décor at that time was overtly thematic, with terracotta tiles, desert murals, a cactus water feature,” Sturrock explains. “We suggested removing all the extraneous detail to allow the underlying organic architectural

features breathing space, then creating key focal points using a combination of unique materials, artisanal details, and judicious interjections of brilliant colour to guide the eye through the open-concept spaces.”

Sturrock turned to the client’s Eastern travels for inspiration during the 11-month transformation. She knew the clean lines and serene aesthetic of Eastern tradition would provide a perfect yin-yang inside the home.

Many of the features her firm created evoke an Eastern sensibility, especially the stepped stone and copper water feature separating the foyer from the dining area; the towering metal and limestone fireplace in the great room; the curved acrylic resin wall between the kitchen and great room, with its sandwiched reeds and copper framing; and the massive, custom-designed pivot door that serves as a gateway to the master suite.

That last element was an engineering feat all on its own, as were many other aspects of this project.

Sturrock fine-tuned the water feature to achieve just the right ambience. She created a subtle trickle with a soothing effect, the water flowing over curved copper plates as a bust of the Buddha presides above.

Another significant challenge was the design of the two-storey fireplace. It had to be spectacular without distracting from the view through

the flanking windows or fighting against the rusticity of the beamed ceiling, says Sturrock. “It presented a fantastic opportunity to interject a more contemporary note, and the material choice drove the design.” Her firm used cold-pressed steel with a striated patina divided by horizontal segments of limestone, which was also used to create the sculpted hearth base and seat. Its long, clean lines form a striking counterpoint to the beams and columns. ☞

*Sturrock kept the rustic ceiling and stuccoed walls, and installed new limestone floors in the kitchen. In the dining area, the antique Asian dining table and buffet highlight the Eastern motif.*

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The kitchen required the biggest transformation of the entire renovation. The original was home to some of the more Santa Fe elements. “In keeping with the rest of the home, we maintained the rustic wood-beamed ceiling, stuccoed walls, and installed new limestone floors but introduced clean lines and profiles in the millwork that allowed the unique materials to take centre stage,” Sturrock says. She chose simple slab-style cabinet doors in order not

to interrupt the striking vertical grain of the exotic gonçalo alves (tigerwood). The island cabinetry is made of Burma teak, a more simply grained wood that doesn’t distract from the unique slab of petrified wood on top.

The new kitchen features a seamless 96-inch-long stainless-steel countertop below the window, complete with touch-free faucets and two integrated sinks and drain boards. Long, sleek cabinet hardware and glass accent doors in the

upper cabinets provide further counterpoint to the more organic elements. The custom-designed network of handcrafted glass pendants over the dinette are functional works of art, and the pagoda-inspired custom copper range hood is a subtle Eastern reference.

The clients, who were very involved in reimagining their home, asked for a few particular details—for instance, the integrated cutting board and stainless-steel drip tray

installed in the beverage counter that involved the careful co-ordination of three different trades. The finished kitchen is a perfect blend of the earthier Southwestern colours and sleek Eastern-influenced motifs.

Sturrock’s favourite aspect of the project was adding the final touch: original artwork in the great room. The works by Canadian artist Nicolas Ruel are photographic images of Eastern landscapes presented on stainless-steel canvases.

“When hit with natural light, the images are animated, seeming to dance on the metal surface,” says Sturrock. “The vehicle and content are in that perfect yin-yang symbiosis.” It’s the ideal touch for this Eastern and Southwestern home. ▶

(Centre) The ensuite has a unique ceiling-mounted faucet over the freestanding tub with custom oval wood surround. The colour scheme makes use of a neutral earth-toned palette with shots of brilliant jewel hues such as sapphire and ruby. (Right) Sturrock’s approach was to offer an artful, unexpected interpretation of the home’s Southwest architectural traditions to create the perfect blend of east and west cultures.