

MANSION GLOBAL

DESIGNER'S CORNER

Reimagine Your Home With Salvaged Materials

From wood barn beams to antique doors, reclaimed items can fold into any design style to give it a sense of depth and time

BY TRACY KALER | ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON JULY 14, 2021 | [MANSION GLOBAL](#)



In a Bethesda, Maryland residence, Josh Hildreth clad a load-bearing beam in wood salvaged from a barn, then created a faux beam to balance the design. He also added reclaimed wood to the ceiling. KIP DAWKINS

Each week, Mansion Global tackles a topic with an elite group of designers from around the world who work on luxury properties. This week, we look at designing with repurposed materials,

From repurposed brick to refinished antique doors, architectural salvage is a hot trend in home decor. Designers often seek out that star piece to lend personality to a single room or curate a collection to transform an entire house. These historical elements can blend with the traditional and the cutting-edge and step up style in any interior.

“Layering ‘time’ into spaces creates rooms that feel seasoned and have soul,” says Josh Hildreth, owner of Josh Hildreth Interiors in Washington, D.C. Hildreth advises to learn the story behind the items and to allow architectural salvage to lead the way in the creative process. “This may provide inspiration for other parts of the design that wouldn’t have been thought of otherwise.”

We turned to a select group of designers for their best tips on finding and blending vintage and reclaimed pieces in residential spaces.

Repurpose in Unexpected Ways

“Our process for choosing this type of item is to discuss and plan as we’re developing the aesthetic of the house—if it’s something the client is looking for. Often, a vintage or repurposed element is just the right thing to bring authenticity or a unique vibe to a project.

“If you are doing a project in an older home, that can be a source for unique vintage pieces, too. We were able to paint and repurpose a pair of the home’s original interior doors to create a new built-in closet that is now a beautiful and authentic focal point in the home’s entryway.

“We love to use vintage pieces in unexpected ways, such as an antique dresser turned into a powder room vanity. Antique doors, windows and stained glass are all fun to use as accents or focal points. Allow these pieces to shine by using them sparingly, so their uniqueness can truly be appreciated and celebrated.”



Morgante Wilson Architects repurposed a pair of antique doors to create a new built-in closet in a foyer.

Mike Schwartz Photography

— Elissa Morgante, co-founder and partner at Morgante Wilson Architects in Evanston, Illinois

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Source Salvage Online

“We love incorporating architectural salvage such as reclaimed doors, bathtubs, pedestal sinks, flooring and even wavy glass window panes. We will use salvage both practically as well as ornamentally to add an additional layer to a home’s interior. Pieces with history and character can add warmth, texture, irregularity, and a good story to both historic homes and new construction. Additionally, it’s great for the environment.

“The internet is an incredible resource—be it sourcing antique Delft tile or a historic French marble fireplace mantle—and most vendors have their wares posted online. There you can find measurements and accurate photos that help you visualize the item in context with the rest of your home’s finishes and fixtures. We love online auctions like LiveAuctioneers and eBay, local classifieds and aggregate sites such as 1stDibs or Chairish.”



Designer Keren Richter says the internet is a top resource for finding vintage items like this AGA range.

White Arrow

— Keren Richter, co-founder and designer at White Arrow in Brooklyn, New York

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Don't Expect Perfection

“Before buying the bulk of the items in a room, find one unique and preferably vintage or antique item and let it inspire the other elements of the design, such as color, texture and pattern. The rooms are often better for it.

“If you are going to use reclaimed materials, be sure they are appropriate to the context. For example, barn wood from an old farm doesn't make sense in an urban loft, but materials from an old factory or warehouse would.

“Don't expect perfection. Part of the charm of using reclaimed materials is their imperfections—you must be willing to embrace their character and how that will affect the design. If you want perfectly straight lines and smooth surfaces, you should consider using new materials.”



In a Bethesda, Maryland residence, Josh Hildreth clad a load-bearing beam in wood salvaged from a barn, then created a faux beam to balance the design. He also added reclaimed wood to the ceiling.

Kip Dawkins

— Josh Hildreth of Josh Hildreth Interiors

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Treat Vintage Objects as Art

“In the design of new spaces, it is best to know the novel piece you want to utilize first, then design the environment around the piece to seamlessly integrate it.

“There is something to be said for ‘collecting as you go along.’ But unless your style is prone to a natural eclecticism, I generally recommend treating a special vintage object as you would a piece of art, allowing it to inform the room rather than trying to make it work with an already established visual rhythm.

“Using reclaimed architectural elements in unexpected ways is one of my favorite ways to personalize a space. Consider utilizing reclaimed timbers as decorative elements in a great room (though often they need to be hollowed out first because of their dense weight). Another favorite Insta-charm trick is using reclaimed Chicago bricks, which can be used on flooring, fireplace hearths, and walls. Reclaimed, vintage, historic furniture first comes to mind for so many, but reclaimed architectural materials are the unsung hero of aged charm.”



Purple Cherry Architects specified reclaimed Chicago bricks for a staircase wall in a Centerville, Maryland home.

Durston Saylor

— Cathy Purple Cherry, principal at Purple Cherry Architects in Annapolis, Maryland

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