

Homes

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Treasures from the past brighten new homes

By Robin Gallaher Branch
Special Sections Writer

Marianne Dorman, co-owner of Bill Dorman Construction, thoroughly knows the details of each home the company builds and gets excited about their special, individual aspects. Many times, creating a point of interest involves incorporating an antique — be it door, window, bureau, column or whatnot — into or onto a home's structure.

Currently the company, which builds two homes a year, is working with antique flooring that one of its clients found and fell in love with: terra cotta tiles from France. The yellows reflect tiles kilned from Bordeaux and the pinks and ochers call to mind the south and west of France, Dorman says.

"They're old and walked on," she continues, describing the 8-inch-by-eight-inch tiles. "They have a patina you just can't duplicate, a look, a richness to them." A tell-tale difference between these and modern tiles is that as handmade items, they are not perfectly (and boringly! she adds) square.

"Anything handmade has an unmistakable look. Recycling old pieces gives character to something new," Dorman says. The French tiles, guaranteed to be at least 100 years old, will grace almost all rooms on the ground floor of the 6,000-square-foot house.

The Dormans are among Austin's builders, designers and suppliers who assimilate antiques regularly into the homes they build, decorate and live in.

Fern Smith Santini, a designer with Abode who works closely



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with the Dormans, loves recycling old pieces and fitting them to modern needs.

"It's definitely worth it. But you must plan ahead and do it as early as possible in the construction phase," she advises. Of course anything can be done at any time, "but past the framing stage, it's more costly," she adds.

See Antiques, G8



Photos by Walter Brewer

The classic Texas style of this home, left, built by Bill Dorman Construction lends itself to the incorporation of Texas-related antiques. The owners used antique stars, top right, that used to be used for construction to make the bases of wall sconces for a hallway. An old wagon wheel from one of the owners' grandfather's farm was incorporated into a light fixture, above, that hangs in the stairwell.