



Unique pavers make for modern and green entry way to this elegant West University home.

# STATE OF THE ART

A local boutique owner shares her recently sold West U home, a creative space she now passes on to another young family.

*By Michele Meyer*

*Photography by TK Images*

Stand closer. That's great advice at museums—and a must when visiting interior designer Karen Pulaski's West University home or her luxury linens boutique, Tribute Goods ([tributegoods.com](http://tributegoods.com)). "I love layers of little pretty details that you barely see at first," she says. "And I don't worry about rules."

Thus, her 4,770-square-foot manse on Sewanee Avenue became a bold art installation as well as "a nurturing cocoon filled with treasures," says the mother of two. She bought the five-bedroom home in 2009 for its open floor plan and proximity to West U schools, and it became her empty canvas.

Pulaski eschewed paint and wallpaper, opting instead to let an artist compose something unique for her front parlor and dining room. She naturally turned to the Glassell School of Art core program, which she ardently supports, choosing artist-in-residence Marco Villegas. Because he'd never painted beyond canvas, it was an adventure for them both. "I gave him a few ideas, and we just let it happen." In three weeks, Villegas created a massive patchwork quilt of bold colors, mementos, stencils, papier-mache and thread.

"Karen was brave. I didn't know what it'd look like at the end," the artist says, "and neither did she. I sometimes doubted myself, but she was always encouraging." Pulaski's contractors may have been baffled, but she never lost courage. "My girls couldn't wait to swing open the doors to see what he'd done that day."

Taupe silk curtains throughout the ground floor may seem simply a backdrop, but upon inspection, they reveal threads of gray with hints of barely-there blue. Nancy Ruby—who also adds an artist's touch to Tribute Goods' Frette-caliber bedding—used a syringe for her handiwork.

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Clockwise from top left: A breakfast nook off the chef's kitchen looks out into the backyard; the open family room has French doors out to the pool area and also opens up into the kitchen; a grand piano anchors the formal living room, located off the front foyer.



...CONTINUED Wall art is equally unexpected. A Jane Dixon highway painting hanging in a hallway “is so Texas,” Pulaski says. Indeed, it’s painted on AstroTurf, the artificial grass invented for the world’s first roofed stadium, Houston’s Astrodome. Even wallpaper, from Studio Printworks, proves quirky. At first, a powder room’s burnt orange print seems to be a French pastoral toile, but upon a closer look, one can see its Texas twist: tiny cowboys on horseback.

Heirlooms have followed Pulaski from home to home. They include a 90-foot French dressmakers’ table that serves as her desk and a vintage mahogany baby grand Steinway bought at an auction. They are the centerpieces around which she uses tints and textures to create a flow from room to room. “It’s a dance, one step at a time.” A curved cafe au lait master bedroom sofa echoes the rounded back Windsor Smith sapphire silk velvet chairs in the dining room, which are “not practical, but fabulous.”

The custom “crazy pink” Marc Phillips Tibetan silk and wool rug connects with softer pink high-

back chairs and pillows in the family room. And the pink-rose-adorned butter yellow needlepoint chairs in the study reflect the matching pillows in the master bedroom. Now that her eldest daughter, 18, is attending University of Southern California in Los Angeles, Pulaski and her heirlooms will hit the road after nine years.

Within a week of its listing, the home went into contract and was sold to a family of five enthralled with its bold walls—a fortuitous bonus for Pulaski and Villegas. “I decided it was the right time. I pictured my younger daughter, 16, and me in a contemporary, open, bright space.”

She’s thrilled with her latest design challenge: a 3,000-square-foot penthouse perch with floor-to-ceiling windows in Gerald Hines’ The Southmore in the Museum District.

“I’m excited to know my art and furniture will be reborn in a modern space with so much light,” Pulaski says. “It will be fun, and I’ll take it one step at a time, editing as I go.” ■

