

Featured Alumna: Sarah HANNAH, Class of 1999

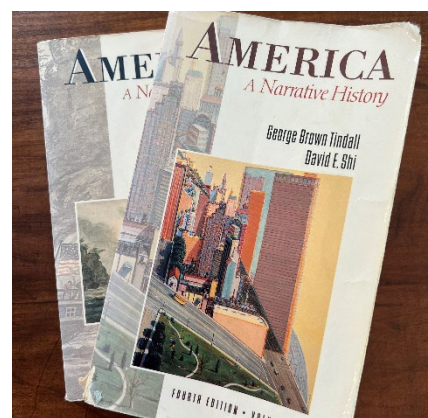


Sarah HANNAH '99 is the owner and principal designer of [Four Square Design Studio](#), a Houston-based boutique design firm focusing on residential projects with a special concentration on historic buildings. Sarah joined Four Square as a Senior Designer in 2014 and became the sole owner in January 2022.

Sarah's work has been featured in local and national media. A recent guest quarters addition was covered in the [Houston Chronicle](#) and by [Domino](#). Four of the six houses featured on last month's [Woodland Heights home tour](#) are in Sarah's portfolio.

Due to the large-scale nature of her projects, most take two to three years from conception to completion. This means that Sarah's work becomes highly personal. She's witnessed multiple couples move from dating to marriage to parenthood throughout a single project. "I love that I get to be intimately part of people's lives for so long... it is one of the reasons that I chose to focus on residential vs commercial design."

Sarah's academic background is an advantage to her work in preservation. She earned her dual BA in History and Art History in 2003 from Rice University. At Duchesne, Sarah excelled in all her history classes. "There were always such high expectations, long essays, and endless amounts of homework, but history class caused me the least amount of stress and worry." Foreign languages proved more challenging. However, a fortuitous French test directed her to her second major: "One semester we had a test on French artists that everyone in the class



Sarah's American history textbooks sit on her home office bookshelf. They are the only ones she kept from high school.

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bombed, but I made a perfect score. I never thought about studying Art History until that day.”

In 2008, she earned an MFA in Interior Design from the University of Houston. “I knew [with my majors] that I'd likely be going to grad school for almost any career I decided to pursue...the major debate was the Architecture vs Interior Design route.” Ultimately, she chose the latter for its hybrid curriculum of classes in both the Architecture School and School of Art. “Most of my projects today are architectural in nature—large scale additions, full house renovations, new construction—so it turns out I get to wear both architecture and interiors hats in my day-to-day life.”

While her focus has been on residential architecture for the past decade, Sarah spent the early part of her career with a firm known for creating and installing large-scale civic artwork. This industrial experience expanded her professional horizons, yet she finds the personalized nature of her current role exceptionally rewarding. What brings her the most joy, outside of "designing a small space that is a jewel box," are the relationships she builds.



The Hannah sisters: Emily (2002), Catherine (1998), and Sarah (1999)

"The thing that makes me the happiest is when I have repeat clients. There is no better sign that clients were happy than them calling me to work on their next project or next house."

Sarah's nostalgia for her time at Duchesne echoes her passion for her work at Four Square. "I love that families are involved from generation to generation. Seeing multiple generations and extended families be part of the Duchesne community was always so endearing to me." Sarah's own family is now counted in that group: her sisters (Catherine '98, Emily '02) are graduates and her nieces are current students. Above all else, she gushes "how great it was to go to school every day with my sisters!"