

Hidden Romance

A new Tudor-style house in North Carolina uses unexpected architectural nuances to evoke the charm and eccentricity of its 15th-century English prototype.

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Clever, secret devices typical of Tudor style begin just inside the front entry of this Charlotte home, where a door masquerading as a framed tapestry leads to a powder room.





THIS PHOTO: Floor-to-ceiling windows inset into the living room's curved plaster walls require no adornment. RIGHT: Crude mortar joints between the facade's bricks amplify the home's timeworn appeal.



Architectural historians will tell you Tudor style has no fixed rules. The English prototype sprang from the introduction of the chimney stack, and the higgledy-piggledy look of the style's myriad rooflines and quaint windows was a balancing act around interior sources of heat. "The style grew from additions like a random group of thoughts," says architect Ruard Veltman, who kept that fluidity in mind as he crafted this Tudor-style home in Charlotte. "The house is charming and intriguing from the outside, but inside, there's another level of discovery with whimsies and asymmetry that are a throwback to the wit of original Tudor homes. It's foreign to what we expect in houses today."

The iconoclastic design features open rooms that flow into one another, but it also incorporates ways to enlarge or enclose spaces. For example, hidden doors in a paneled wall in the dining room lead to the kitchen to meet entertaining needs. Veltman encouraged a sense of whimsy with tiny windows that provide peephole views into rooms and a master shower accessed via a slender doorway that requires turning sideways to pass through. His attention to detail also shines in the breakfast room, where seating positioned at eye level with an herb garden fosters intimacy. "All the quirks, even a tight little twist in a passage, are signals calculated to excite and reveal," Veltman says. "It's an enchanting style."

Interior designer Cindy Smith straddled the house's capacity to morph between formal and informal and grand and intimate with a neutral color scheme, evenhanded tailoring, and furnishings that feel accumulated over time. "The house looks and feels old," Smith says. "It needed things that had been around awhile to make it comfortable in its own skin."

Smith wasn't the first to dress the house, but she embraced designers Ann Dupuy and Eugenie Gibbens' decision during the first installation to treat some of the pecky cypress paneling, timber beams, and ceiling planks to a limed stain and distressing versus a more traditional dark walnut finish. "The house has amazing features—even empty, it's decorated," Smith says. "I supported that with warmth of color, although not too much, and softness delivered by rugs, skirted chairs, and cushioned window seats."

“There’s an allure to Tudor architecture that comes from intriguing devices.”

—ARCHITECT RUARD VELTMAN



ABOVE: Slipcovered chairs around an antique Spanish table serve as contemporary complements to the dining room’s architectural detailing. FAR LEFT: In homage to the romance of Tudor style, architect Ruard Veltman connected the home’s three floors with a spiral staircase. LEFT: An eye-level window built into the wall opposite the front door provides a view to the living room fireplace. BELOW LEFT: Veltman raised the family room’s floor three steps above the kitchen to emulate the feel of lower ceiling heights usually found in the informal rear rooms of Tudor houses. OPPOSITE: To foster a tailored look in the foyer, interior designer Cindy Smith furnished a limestone-and-leaded-glass window bay with one of the owners’ paintings and a cream tone-on-tone double bolster.



“We used antique finishes to give the house a sense of authenticity, not just a semblance of old.”

—RUARD VELTMAN

BELOW: The range fits neatly into a masonry hearth painted white to distinguish the cooking area from the kitchen's more contemporary island and built-ins. RIGHT: An herb garden sits at the same level as the breakfast room seating “to nestle the room into a beautiful site,” Veltman says.





FAR LEFT: When the master bedroom's wall space was allotted to a fireplace (not shown) and a window seat under a gracious Tudor arch, Veltman added a floating wall at the room's entrance to anchor the bed. LEFT: A 19-inch-wide doorway beside the sink in the master bath provides a portal to a circular shower built into the nonfunctioning part of the home's main chimney.

