

THE IDEAL MARRIAGE OF
ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN CREATES
A HOUSE THAT TRANSCENDS TIME

POETIC VISION

Architecture and design by RUARD VELTMAN Interview by MIMI READ Photographs by ERIC PIASECKI

On a sloping site in western North Carolina, architect Ruard Veltman designed a house that blends English country and American Arts and Crafts with his own flair for drama. The rear façade features a staircase of Tennessee fieldstone that leads to a covered porch with an outdoor fireplace. **OPPOSITE:** The undulating foothills of the Appalachian Mountains.



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TO HEAR FROM
THE DESIGNER



MIMI READ: This is such a stately living room. Are you sure we're in the middle of the Appalachian Mountains?

RUARD VELTMAN: It's actually the rolling foothills of the range, and part of a small community of homes and a golf course that dates back to the 1920s. Everybody knows each other.

Did you design this house from scratch?

I did. The views dictated everything. You walk into the hall, take a right into the living room, and there's a card table with four chairs. The house is recessed into the grade, and when you sit there, you notice that the grass is right at the level of the windowsill. You're literally nestled in the earth. But if you walk to the far end of the room, where the floor-to-ceiling bay window is, you're suddenly 20 feet off the ground, jutting into the view.

A hobbit-like feeling at one end of the room and an aerie at the other end? That's a lot of drama.

I create rooms to satisfy feelings. There are times when you want to be open to the world and times you want to be huddled, with low ceilings and no windows. It's like music. Do you always listen to the same music? There's no way you can be in the same mood all the time.

Has being Dutch shaped your style?

Not really. I was born in Germany and raised in the States by Dutch parents. My European travels exposed me to a romantic lifestyle, but my visual aesthetic was influenced more by Bobby McAlpine. He taught me in architecture school, and I worked for his office right after that. Bobby designs houses that define American style. They blend modernism and tradition in this wonderful way. His architecture has a soul.

Who are the homeowners?

A couple living in Charlotte. The husband wanted a little mountain shack. But the wife had bigger ideas. She wanted different spaces for different purposes and various times of day. They have four children, and she loves to entertain. She's also a designer and was very involved in the interior.

The decorating and the architecture are so seamless. It's as if the same person did both.

It was a collaborative effort. My office designed a few of the furnishings: the bunk beds, the kitchen table, and all the porch furniture. We also did the furniture plan because we have opinions about how rooms should be used. We suggested curtains in the living room to break up the space and soften the architecture. She chose the rest of the furniture

and all the fabrics, and she had the imagination to use mohair and shagreen, which are not typically used in a mountain house. She wanted everything spare and elegant with these warm, woodsy colors. **Like McAlpine, you've fused modernism with traditional style. But the exterior has an old-world look.**

To do a blatantly contemporary exterior in this community wouldn't have been appropriate. But inside, I could express my modern side. Still, it's mixed, because the client loves both worlds and so do I. The timbered ceilings are certainly classic. The paneled wood walls and lack of trim are modern touches, as is the floor-to-ceiling window, but the small panes and mullions are traditional.

Why did you tuck the dining room into a small, low-ceilinged alcove?

When you enter the dining room from the living room, the ceiling drops. You're cut off from the drama of the living room, but you can still see it. So you're a little bit more focused on the act of dining and conversation. At night, it's only candlelight and those three bare bulbs from the chandelier, which we designed. It feels as if the table and guests are the only things that exist.

The bed in the master bedroom is also tucked away in an upholstered niche.

We wanted to create a little intimacy. She chose the bronze-colored linen and came up with a chevron pattern using nailheads. She likes to employ one general palette and play with tones and textures.

In between a pair of upholstered doors in the dining room, there's cabinetry that looks like paneling, and when you open it, it's like magic—you can reach into the kitchen's shelves.

It's an old-fashioned pass-through. You can put the dishes away in the kitchen after they're washed and take them out again in the dining room when you need them. It's useful and playful. It makes the house come alive.

The master bathroom is clean-lined and sensual. With those casement windows above the tub, it's like sunbathing.

The tub is so sculptural. The marble floor tile was laid in a dominant chevron pattern—I didn't need to add much else. Besides, the view is beautiful: mountains alternating with prairies, and at night, the twinkle of town lights. I thought the architecture should take a back seat. Sometimes simple is what you are supposed to do.

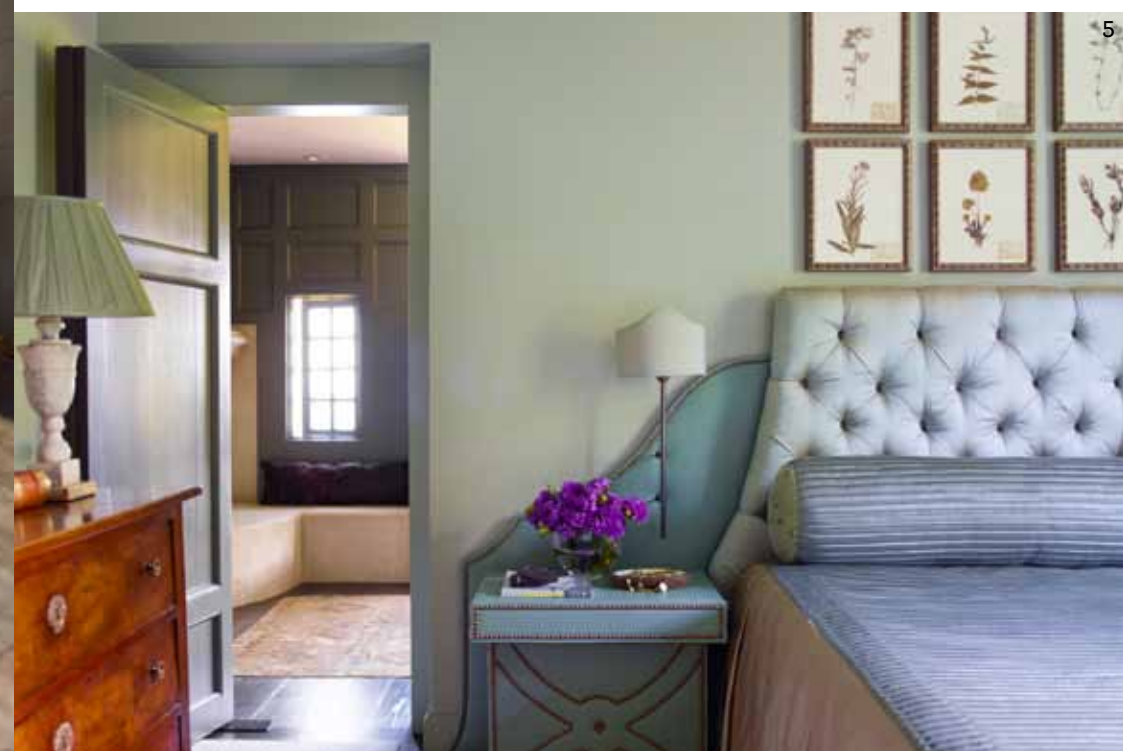
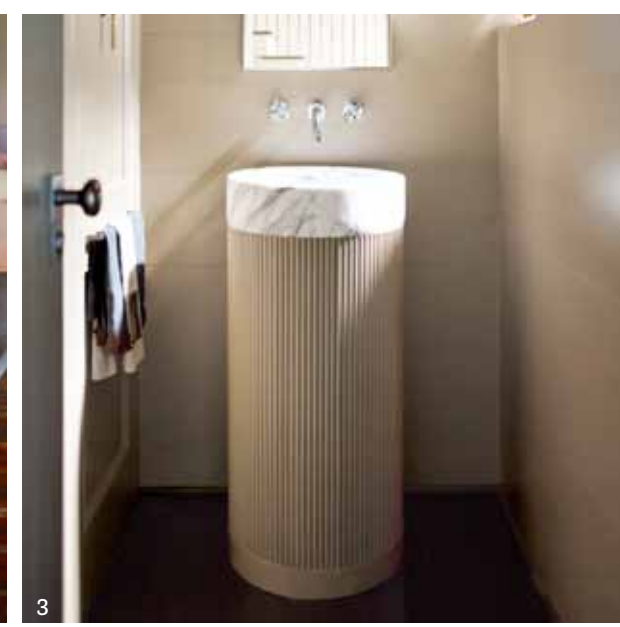
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LEFT: "If the house could tell a story, it would say that this living room was built first and that the rest of the house followed," Veltman says. The grand, floor-to-ceiling bay window floods the room with light and creates a special nook furnished with an 11-foot Chesterfield upholstered in Innovations' Belgique. Facing the limestone fireplace is Oly's Kirin sofa upholstered in Maharam's Mohair Extreme. Unusual juxtapositions, like an antique three-legged chair and a limited-edition Kelly Wearstler multisided cubic stool, animate the room. Coffee table by R&Y Augousti. Curtains in Pindler & Pindler's Velluto.



LEFT: A custom-made table abuts the kitchen island to create more prep space and encourage sit-down meals. Open shelving offers plenty of storage and is also accessible from the dining room's pass-through. Metal stools, R&Y Augousti. **TOP:** The dining room's French farm table is surrounded by Louis XIII-style chairs covered in Pindler & Pindler's Laredo faux suede. The landscape painting is by the wife's father, and the walls are painted Farrow & Ball's Hardwick White. **ABOVE:** A doorway in the dining room leads down to the kitchen.

Veltman designed the entry hall to be beautiful but unassuming. His staircase echoes Shaker design: Its railing is unadorned except for the lamb's tongue that connects to the newel post. The Oly bench is upholstered in Innovations' Mont Blanc mohair; the wall sconces are by Dennis & Leen. **OPPOSITE: 1.** The husband's study with a limestone inglenook is hidden behind a panel off the living room. Orange blanket by Rani Arabella. **2.** The covered porch, with wood and metal furniture by Ruard Veltman Architecture, offers mountain views. **3.** The powder room's Carrara marble sink tops a custom-made wood pedestal; fittings are by Dornbracht. **4.** Oly's Jonathan game table is surrounded by antique English chairs. **5.** In the guest room, the satin-covered headboard flows into a faux leather-covered bedside table for a unified look. **6.** A dining room door is upholstered in faux suede. **7.** On the lower level, a boy's bedroom features a pair of custom-made modern bunk beds without ladders—children climb up the brackets. Philippe Starck Ghost chair by Kartell.





The palette in the upstairs master bedroom comes straight from nature: "You're in the treetops—spruce, pines, oaks, and maples," Veltman says. The headboard and bolster are covered in celadon Knoll velvet, and the tufted bench is upholstered in smoky Pindler & Pindler linen, which also covers the chevron panels in the niche. **OPPOSITE:** The master bath is a spa-like oasis, with sumptuous but minimal furnishings. Walker Zanger's marble Helsinki tiles echo the chevron pattern in the bedroom and set off the strong, sculptural shape of Wetstyle's Ove tub. Tara fixtures by Dornbracht. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES