

C A R O L I N A

Architecture & Design



houses are. She's currently working on a major remodeling of a Naples, FL waterfront home. Or she could be working on a house in Palm Beach or New Orleans for clients with homes in Western North Carolina.

"This house on Butler Mountain will be a work-in-progress for some time," she assesses. "These are established people in the community who relish the acquisition process and are in no hurry to meet entertaining deadlines and commitments. However, they did say that the husband's cardiology group would like to have a Christmas party at the home "one of these years," she added, chuckling.

Meanwhile, the family is relishing each day's new discovery from their mountaintop perspective. "We've all appreciated being surrounded by nature," says the wife. "And this is such a cozy house. We'll obviously have more snow which the children will love."

The first powder of the season might just have a pinch of pixie dust mixed in it.

MOUNTAINTOP MAGIC

FAIRVIEW, NC

GENERAL CONTRACTOR

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INTERIOR DESIGN

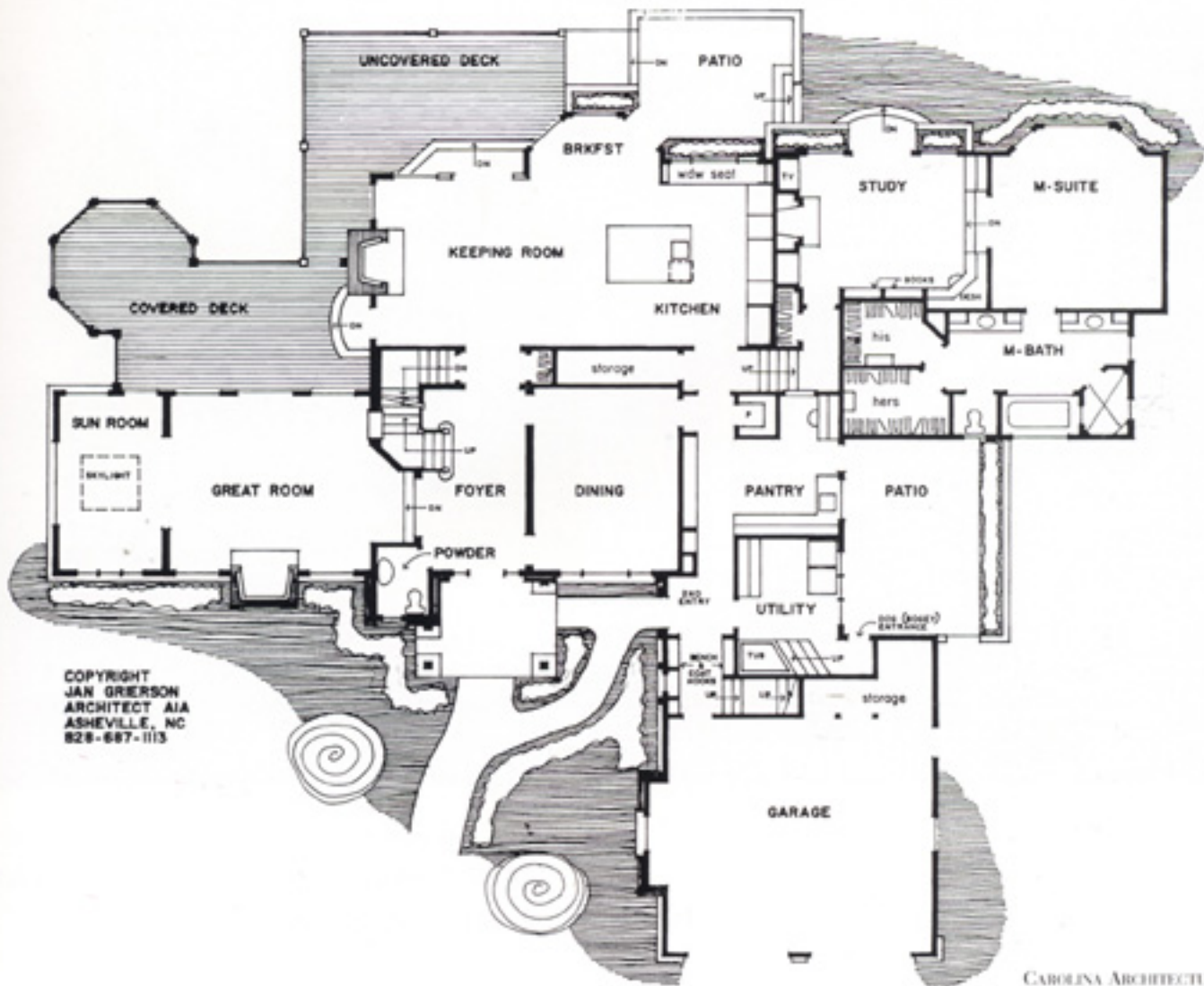
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Shingles reminiscent of the English Arts and Crafts movement appear on the back exterior of the house.





Dark cabinetry, white marble sink tops, and nickel-plated fixtures are standards for European ambiance in the master bath. A private walled courtyard is reflected in the mirror.

Primarily, Nilsson's forte lay in selecting finishes and in tying together the disparate elements in the kitchen and pantry areas. In deference to the wife's preference for an unstructured look, they chose the blue Aga stove, a pine center island, and a dark oak Welsh dresser for the kitchen. In the butler's pantry, Nilsson used vanilla-colored cabinets at one end, dark green ones at the other end. "An interior designer can easily put together everything in a coordinated manner, but an experienced eye wants to make things a little more interesting by having different finishes that work well together," she offered. "I find about 10% of the owners will agree to mismatched orientation. For this house, it's particularly appropriate in order to capture a European ambiance, since their interiors developed piecemeal over time," she concluded.

Nilsson began her career working in an architect's office where she had to do detailing, so she's trained in that. Though she now outsources that work to others, she finds she is highly tuned to construction and detailing, finding it a very practical asset in her approach to interiors.

A native of Asheville, Nilsson's practice is centered there though she follows her extensive clientele wherever their other

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A country quilt, checked pillows, and coordinated floral chintz on the club chairs create a comfy, casual mood in the master bedroom.





Very "old world" in appearance, a large pantry includes places for flower arranging, storage, the mother's desk and computer, plus the family's "control center", an oversized bulletin board which tracks their activities and appointments.

room. The George V needlepoint chair from the family collection became the starting point for the color palette. The living room fireplace from Stone Magic

was chosen over a wood one so that the view upon entering would be oriented to the magnificent panorama beyond. The green Louis XV chairs in the window were

purchased from an estate sale. The coffee table and end table are English reproductions from Bobby Morley's "Tynes House of Lewes."

in December. But that didn't keep his building crew from dealing with cold blasts of wind and winter elements at the 3,300-foot height. Amazingly, the family moved in the following summer, a rather short turn-around time for a house of its size.....3,000 square feet under roof.....which generally takes at least a year. Though "youngish" for the construction business, Barker is making his mark as a builder of luxury homes in the Asheville area.

The stonework arch details, keeping room fireplace, and exterior stone facade were done by Tony Reese of Ornamental Stoneworks who used quartzite stone from

Virginia. Though the arches required some chiseling, by and large, the wife preferred rustic work with no chiseling, with stone placed just the way it comes from the field; there is no certain bond or pattern. In most installations there is, which Reese achieves by putting a building line on the stone to keep it even and to give it a rubble look which is bold but controlled. Reese was trained to do chisel work, starting at age 14 when he studied masonry in high school, then worked as an apprentice and stone mason, building years of experience and knowledge in the process. Not content to remain static, he's working with stone carvers in Washington, DC, to become adept at more elaborate stone fireplace carvings.

Interior designer Susan Nilsson suggested carrying the slate from the front entry into the house, through the hallway, and into the living room, thus unifying the spaces. In most interior areas, the designer kept backgrounds neutral, providing a foil for the darker woods of the family heirlooms she incorporated into living arrangements. The keeping room has dark brown leather pieces from Hancock Moore played against light walls.

To keep the living room, with its 17-foot ceiling, from being "too castle-like," she selected the simplicity of the English chintz sofa to warm and soften the space of the

The window seat encourages conversations with the cook or miles-long views to the twinkling lights of Asheville in wintertime. The blue Aga stove is a colorful addition to the cooking end of the large family kitchen.





Dark oak Welsh dresser is from Bobby Morley.

the courtyard off the pantry. There's also an outside dog grooming station with warm water for outdoor bathing. Or, there's a "dog laundry room" indoors

just off the "human" laundry room for more inclement times. The dogs have their own door to the back courtyard.

A study adjoins the master suite, offering a wing of privacy to the parents. Upstairs are the three children's bedrooms and baths, with a hallway balcony which allows communications between them and the parents' quarters downstairs. A large space planned for guests has found more immediate service as an exercise/playroom/all-purpose space for the family.

Much of the European inspiration the wife sought was achieved through a year of meeting with Brian Reed of Architectural Windows and Doors. Together, they explored window adaptations for the architect's plans which would give her more the distinctive character she was looking for.

"In fact," said Reed, "much of the capabilities of the Weathershield products we carry had some influence on the house design since whatever is drawn by the architect and can be engineered, can be made by the Weathershield company. The owner found that versatility appealing," he added. The choice made was the aluminum-clad windows with removable full surround grills in a poly finish and the true divided light window with low "e" glass to deflect weather and help with heating and cooling. Arched eyebrow casement windows were used for dramatic effect in front.

Architectural Windows and Doors also supplied the oak trim on the arched openings off the front hallway, as well as the handsome exterior doors of mahogany which were handmade by boat craftsmen.

With daily visits to the site, the owners watched their plans unfold. Builder Mark Barker of MWB Construction began grading the site in August, began the framing in November, and had the roof on



An interesting blend of dissimilar finishes makes for European eclecticism in the attractive kitchen. The center pine island is by Wildwood Studios.

to the back deck. A cozy window seat makes for cooking conversations or enjoying miles-long views in winter to downtown Asheville.

A separate pantry is used for flower arranging, storage, and as "control center," that part which houses the wife's desk and computer. A wall-sized

bulletin board posts and tracks family scheduling and activities, all attractively packaged with an old-fashioned feeling. A potting table is just outside in

To keep the high-ceilinged living room from becoming "too castle-like", the designer chose cozy English chintz upholstery fabric to warm and soften the space.





Inspired by illustrations in a book of fairy tales, the front hallway has European styled dark paneling contrasted against light background.

The German inscription carved in the mantel over the fireplace in the keeping room translates to "Be kind to one another."



shape. Drawing from favorite fairy-tale books and illustrations which she wanted to capture in the house, the wife turned to interior designer Susan Nilsson. An alchemist of design in her own right, Nilsson was the perfect choice for a flight of whimsy, she of the impish twinkle in her eye, an ever-present smile at the ready. Touches like the foyer, paneled in the European style with dark wood and played against white walls, materialized. The stairwell might eventually have a mural of mythical allusion. The carved mantel over the fireplace in the keeping room was inspired by the fairytale concept, its German inscription selected to remind the family to "Be kind to one another." Window fabric in the pantry features storybook characters from Fonthil's "Merry Minstrels" pattern.

Typical of hidden doorways and passages found in fairy tales, this house has a whimsical secret door leading up a winding stairway to a third floor playroom. Though the children have possession for now, the couple has future plans for it as their hideaway. A smaller doorway to the right of the main front entrance leads to the mudroom. With its decorative window box, arch, and stone, its message is not missed by the wife's mother who calls it the "fairy door."

One enters the front hall with powder room, living room, and sunroom to the left, the dining room to the right. Down the hall, the keeping area of the large kitchen is the center of family activity, the hearth around which they generally gather. The full slate door on the refrigerator serves as a blackboard upon which inspirational mottoes are shared. Much the same as in the "old days", the wife wanted the storage and display units to be unstructured with varying elements of cabinetry used. A skywell adds light from above in addition to the large windows and doors which lead



With steeply pitched roof lines, arches, and stone facade, the house reflects many European design influences.



With its decorative window box, arch, and stone, this small entrance is referred to as "the fairy door."

get closer to nature and away from town. Machete was the earliest form of access to their mountain aerie as there were no roads, no trails, only the couple's sheer grit to see what view possibilities might be had. But even their imagination couldn't anticipate what that realization is today.

The six-acre site they selected backs up to another 500 acres of wilderness. Heading out their backdoor, they're within a short hike of waterfalls and wildlife. In their first fall, there have been sightings of a couple of bears, bobcats, wild turkeys, bunnies, and grouse. Eschewing hunting, they delight in watching critters in their native environment.

Somewhat a woodland sprite in spirit, the wife read books and mulled over ideas for about three years before actual plans took



MOUNTAIN TOP MAGIC

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Architect

MARK BARBER
General Contractor

SUSAN NILSSON, ASID
Interior Design

J. WEILAND
Photography

As though tapped by a magic wand, the plans of an Asheville cardiologist and his family to build on top of Butler Mountain near Fairview drew from the wife's fairytale inspiration, became translated by their architect and interior designer, and materialized into a

European-inspired home to be cherished for years. A blending of Tudor touches, French window elements, shingles reminiscent of the English Arts and Crafts Movement, and hand-crafted stonework gives the house the look of having been lifted from the continent and dropped atop the mountain. Four big wooden

pillars from an 1860's dairy barn were placed at the entrance, completing the aura of antiquity.

At a time when most families would think of the convenience of in-town living as a plus for their active teens and pre-teen children, these avid naturalists wanted to