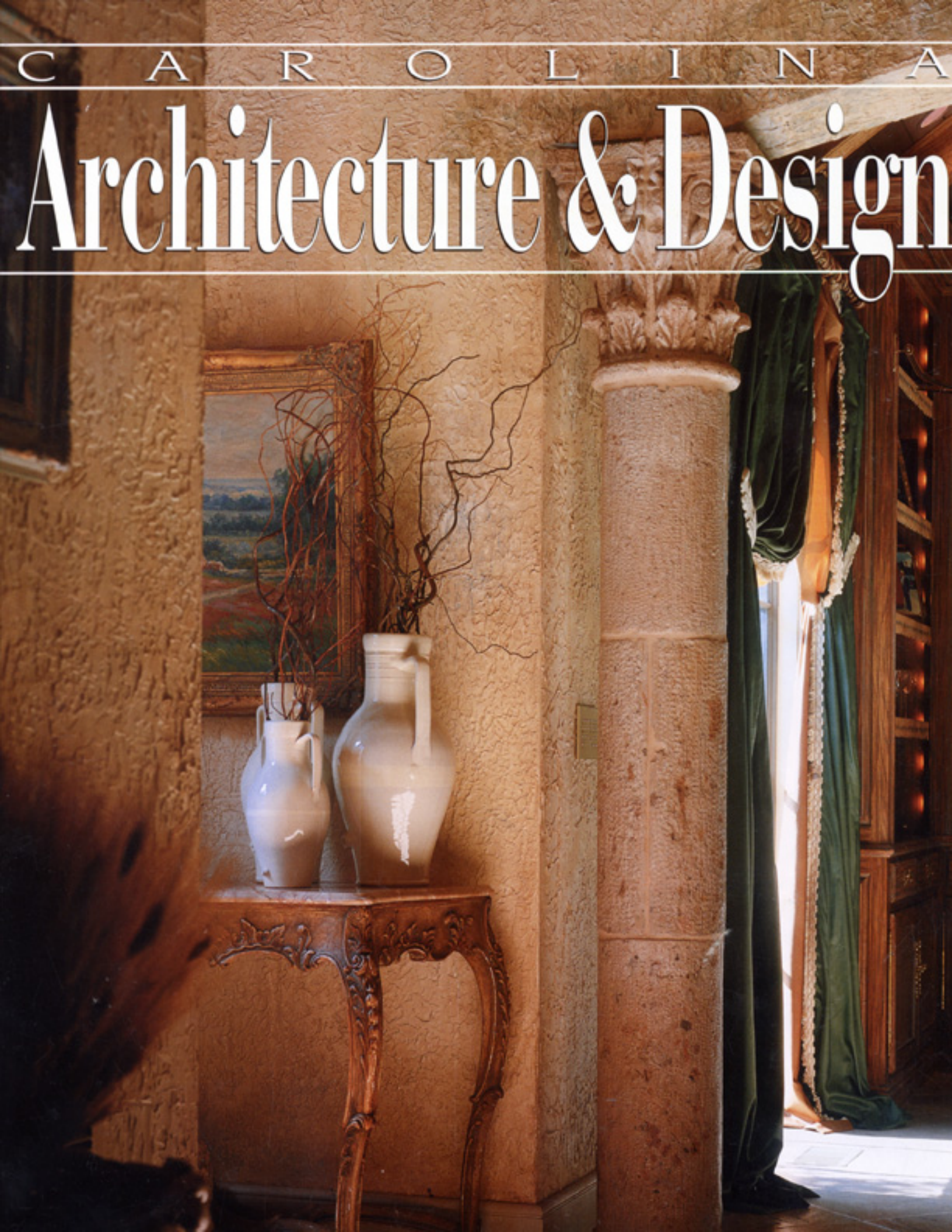


C A R O L I N A

Architecture & Design



futons, keeping with the Japanese custom of storing bedding in chests or closets when not in use. "We've had these futons for a number of years, but we've never had closets to hold them," says the owner. "We had these closets sized specifically for them."

There is also a closet built on the lower level specially designed for a sewing machine and supplies. "I open the doors and sit there and sew," says the owner.

Now that they have settled into their custom-built mountain home, the owners appreciate having surroundings so closely suited to their eclectic tastes. "In the past, every time we relocated, we had about two months to find a place to live," explains the owner. "Building was never an option until my husband approached retirement.



EAST MEETS WEST IN MOUNTAIN RETREAT

HENDERSONVILLE, NC

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STYLIST
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"Cornerstone" by DRAPER&DBS, Inc.

Kitchen Interiors
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The original inspiration for the master bath came from a photograph in a magazine. "We took the client's tear sheet and reinterpreted it using our color theme and bringing forward some Japanese notions," says interior designer Susan Nilsson.

In the bedroom, as in the rest of the house, the broad horizontal window framing conceals motorized window shades. "When they come down, they look like rice paper," says the owner. Since the home's setting is very private, the shades are most useful for blocking the sun.

The window seat along the bedroom's outer glass wall has large drawers for storing bulky clothing and bedding. On top of the window seat, two copper-lined wooden hibachis—now used as planters—sit on either

side of the Korean medicine chest the owner uses as a jewelry box.

The master bathroom reiterates the home's unifying color theme with black matte painted cabinets and black marble flooring. A built-in planter provides the owner "a place to put greenery" at the foot of the whirlpool-equipped tub. The glassed-in shower doubles as a steam room. The interior designer completed the look by suggesting oriental-style light fixtures, black oriental-style monograms on the towels and

black hand soap on the countertop.

Two additional bedrooms, two bathrooms, a recreation room and a garage are on the lower level. With their son living and working in Raleigh and their daughter away most of the year in college, the two downstairs bedrooms—considered "the children's rooms"—are usually available as guestrooms.

Among the features on the lower level, the owners had closets built especially for their

The dining room's coffered ceiling is covered in a Madagascar straw paper specified by the architect and found by the designer. The light fixture suspended over the dining room table is from Japan. "We bought that the first time we were in Japan, and it has hung over our dining room table in every house we've lived in since," says the owner.

Off the living room, the study has built-in cherry cabinets for books and a computer

used by the husband to explore the Internet. In a departure from the neutral gray used in the rest of the house, the study walls are painted blue-green. Like the dining room, the study has straw paper on its coffered ceiling. All other ceilings in the house are finished in natural wood.

The master bedroom best reflects the minimalist approach to furnishing typical of Japanese homes. "In the bedroom, I

wanted the bed, a chest to hold our clothes and nothing else," says the owner.

The bed frame is built into the wall, flanked by shelves and drawers. A folding screen decorated with cherry blossoms is displayed in a lighted alcove at the head of the bed. The owner made the bed's white silk duvet from four Japanese kimonos she purchased used, took apart and sewed back together.

The master bedroom is minimally furnished. The owner normally displays the decorative futon cover draped across the bed as a wall hanging. She made the white silk duvet from four kimonos.





The owner purchased two wing chairs for a traditional home where she and her husband lived during one of his many job assignments for a large oil company. "They're not at all in keeping with the style of the house," she says, "but somehow they work in the study."



Many of the owners' friends and neighbors tasted sushi for the first time while seated at the island counter. The owners enjoy using it for quick, casual meals.

Two upholstered chairs by the window swivel, offering a choice between facing into the room or enjoying a spectacular mountain view. Upholstered hassocks provide additional seating without obstructing the views to the entertainment center or the corner fireplace. A custom-made carpet, cut at an angle in the corner to fit the fireplace, is decorated with a simple black border stripe.

The living room's entertainment center was a source of debate among the owners and the

architect, who wanted the big-screen television concealed behind doors. The owners preferred leaving off the doors since, in a previous home, they had kept their television cabinet open all the time. "To us, the open doors would be an uglier sight than the television," says the owner.

Ultimately, the owners had a wooden frame built for the large-screen television they slid into the space. The frame attaches with magnets, giving the television a built-in look.

Wooden latticework conceals speakers, with audio equipment behind cabinet doors to the left of the television. Several porcelain pieces from the owner's collection are displayed on built-in, lighted shelves.

Adjacent to the living room, the dining room has a round glass-topped table and contemporary chairs and a Japanese-style buffet purchased specially for the home. The couple bought the standing Buddah statue, originally from Burma, in Thailand.



Two chairs, upholstered in black suede, are strategically placed near the kitchen fireplace, giving the owner a comfortable place to relax during the days she spends cooking.

Opposite the living room's wall of windows is another antique Japanese tansu – this one originally for use in a restaurant kitchen. Its sliding doors and drawers were meant to conceal dining trays, bowls and utensils. Set into the wall above the tansu is an open carved panel, or *ranma*, brought from Japan. "The Japanese use them over sliding doors as latticework for ventilation," says the owner.

Above the door leading to the study, a *shoji* panel featuring a persimmon design serves as a transom. "You can open it and look through the persimmon," says the owner. "In a Japanese home, the owners would

have had it above a door so they could look through it to the outside."

At the center of the living room, the owners placed a well-stuffed sectional sofa, strewn with accent pillows in earth tones and black. "My husband and I like to lie down when we watch television," explains the owner.

At either end of the sofa are matching floor lamps. "These lamp designs are featured in the Museum of Modern Art," notes Nilsson, who recommended them for the room. "The owners were concerned that they were too hard-core contemporary, but

after I got them a sample and let them see how it looked in the room, they agreed they were the perfect complement to the simplicity of the oriental design."

The sofa surrounds a table made from a storehouse door on a custom-made frame. "The Japanese often lock up their treasures in a storehouse or *kura*," explains the owner, "and this *kura* door comes from one of those treasure houses." On the table, a stack of three-footed wooden trays sits next to a vase of slender bamboo stalks. "The raised trays would have been used to serve food to someone kneeling on the floor," explains the owner.

here who tasted sushi for the first time sitting in my kitchen.”

The owner's collection of authentic Japanese eating utensils, trays and dishes is on display throughout the kitchen. On the island, a sushi bowl made of aromatic cedar held together by copper bands usually holds fresh fruit. At the kitchen window next to the sink is a Japanese saki jug. “It would have been used for picnics under the cherry trees,” the owner says.

Echoing the home's exterior masonry, the kitchen fireplace is of dry-stacked native stone. A second stone fireplace is set at a 45-degree angle in the corner of the living room.

Next to the living room fireplace, an entertainment center anchors one side of the room, while a folding screen from Japan's late Edo period dominates the other. Set into an alcove created to display it, the screen was “a gift to ourselves for

one of our anniversaries,” says the owner. The alcove is painted a shade darker than the surrounding walls and is lit from above and below to accentuate the screen's gold leaf.

The staircase to the lower level is beneath the screen. Left open to the living room, the staircase was designed to create the perfect niche for an ebony grand piano, there for the couple's daughter to play when she's home from college.

The kitchen's sophisticated simplicity is very much in keeping with Eastern design principles while accommodating the owner's enjoyment of cooking.



kitchen, so I wanted to make it comfy and cozy."

The kitchen cabinets and island are faced in pecan. The island top is polished black granite, with other countertops in white Corian to match the sink. Appliances and cabinet pulls are in black, complemented by strong horizontal black accent stripes. Three contemporary-styled pendant lights illuminate the island, with additional perimeter task lighting under the cabinets.

The owner is particularly pleased with the

kitchen's built-in horizon cabinet, set between two display shelves. "That cabinet is my special hiding place for cookbooks, a toaster and coffee-making supplies," she says. "When it's open, I can get to things easily, and when it's closed, everything is suddenly neat and tidy."

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Opposite the six-burner gas range top, the island has counter space for three place settings. Nearby, a kitchen table provides additional space for casual meals. "We usually eat at the countertop or the table," says the owner. "I do a lot of other things

at that countertop, too."

The counter's three barstools are upholstered in a fabric the owner purchased in Japan, featuring figures of samurai warriors and horses. "The barstools' styling is toward art nouveau," notes Nilsson, "but the simplicity of the crisp, black backs works well in the room."

"These chairs remind me of a Japanese sushi bar," says the owner. "When I have cocktail parties, our guests come in and sit there to eat sushi. There are quite a few people around

After much debate, the owners opted to leave their big screen television in full view of the living room, without doors to conceal it. Instead, they had carpenters fashion a wooden frame that attaches with magnets.





Unlike most of the owners' collection, which they acquired while living in Japan, the standing Buddha statue in the dining room is originally from Burma. They purchased it while living in Thailand.

tricky," adds the owner. "I love the colors Susan helped us choose. They help make everything so calm and peaceful."

The remaining color palette, dominated by earth tones, matches colors in the interior stonework. "Every time we looked at different colors, we came back to the colors of the fireplace," recalls the owner. "We always came back to earth tones."

In specifying floor plans for their new home, the owners asked that all essential activities

of their daily life be accommodated on the upper of its two levels. "We wanted to live on the top floor without needing to go downstairs," explains the owner. Accordingly, the living room, dining room, kitchen, study and laundry room are on the main floor. Just outside the kitchen, the owner had a stone enclosure built to conceal garbage cans. "I didn't want to have to go downstairs to carry out the garbage," she explains.

The owner also supplied the architect with a detailed list of furniture and artwork, along

with the dimensions and preferred location for each piece. "We wanted to build our home around the treasures we had collected," she says.

The owner's love of cooking made the kitchen design her first priority. In addition to specifying premium appliances and cabinetry, she added a fireplace and a seating area where she could curl up with her cookbooks or watch television while simmering a sauce or stew. "The kitchen is the heart of our home," she explains. "I often spend my whole day in the



the entrance to introduce black as a unifying theme throughout the house," Nilsson explains.

The well-traveled Nilsson has an experienced eye and talent well-suited to translating clients' tastes into workable design solutions. Her travels to the Far East at the outset of this project were especially helpful. "These clients weren't looking for a home with a few superficial Japanese touches," she says. "They wanted to capture the essence of Japanese design philosophy as they had experienced it while living in Japan, and express it in ways that were relevant to their lifestyle today. Having visited so recently and having experienced the culture firsthand, I was able to interpret my clients' vision with much greater understanding and depth."

On the foyer walls, Nilsson introduced the lightest of several shades of neutral gray used throughout the house. "I used gray to counteract all the yellowish-red tones in the fir trim and ceilings," says the designer, who suggested increasingly deeper tones of gray from the front to the back of the house. "The gray gets stronger and deeper from the front to the back of the house. It makes the balance better."

At first, the owner resisted Nilsson's wall color suggestions, thinking her gray tones were too dark. "The palette of colors is much darker than the client originally had in mind," says Nilsson. "The spaces are so large, and there's so much natural light coming in, I knew a lighter palette would look weak and ill-defined. As the samples went up on the wall, I was able to show the client what I was talking about, and she ended up following my suggestions."

"Getting paint colors that would look good with the natural finish of the woodwork was



Experts have told the owner they believe some images painted on their antique folding screen were added long after the original artist finished with it. The alcove where it hangs was specially created to display the piece, with built-in lighting to highlight the gold leaf. The staircase was specially designed to create a niche for the piano.



Although the owner's antique staircase chest is now purely decorative, its original owners might have used it to reach a loft. In its drawers and cupboards, they would have stored treasured possessions.



In the living room, a generously cushioned sectional sofa and upholstered chairs encourage rest and relaxation. The simple woodwork's strong horizontal lines promote peace and tranquility throughout the home's interior.

Although stone is not widely used in Japanese residential construction, the clean horizontal lines, emphasized in the rooflines, window framing and stacked horizontal windowpanes, are very much in keeping with the spirit of Japanese design. The owners ruled out any more blatant expressions of eastern design on the home's exterior to satisfy the community's architectural guidelines.

"Our house had to blend in as part of a mountain home community," says the owner.

"The native stone helped, and we managed to follow many of the basic principals of Japanese design and philosophy without being too obvious."

Once inside the front door, custom-made of mahogany by a local millwork company, the Japanese influence asserts itself much more dramatically. To one side, a Japanese staircase chest, or *kaidan dansu*, displays baskets used in traditional *ikebana* flower arranging. The ingenious design of the antique chest, purchased by the owners in Japan, allows it

to serve as a freestanding staircase as well as a roomy storage cupboard.

At the foot of the staircase chest is an imari porcelain hibachi, used traditionally to contain hot coals for heating and cooking. The owner uses this one as a planter. The iris print hanging above is also from Japan.

On the opposite foyer wall stands another antique storage cabinet, or *tansu*-meaning "movable chest" - also acquired by the owners in Japan.

Their choice of Champion Hills – the Carolina mountains connection – satisfied their desire to retire to a golf community where the climate would offer four distinct seasons while still permitting year-round play.

And, the couple had always liked contemporary architecture.

The home's exterior presents a pleasing facade of dry-stack native stone and glass beneath a series of hipped roofs, which define the primary living areas and shelter the main entrance. The entry to the lower level is tucked away below and to the side.



The owners normally come and go through the lower-level garage, but in bad weather, they park under the covered entrance. "When it snows, we can get out," explains the owner.

A stonemason worked more than six months on the project, using dry-stacked native stone to impart a Carolina mountain flavor to the home's exterior and fireplaces.





EAST MEETS WEST IN MOUNTAIN RETREAT

SUSAN NILSSON, ASID

Interior Design

DAVID DETRUCCI

Photography

As the owners envisioned it, the house they wanted to build for their retirement would be “a Japanese, contemporary, Frank Lloyd Wright, Carolina mountain home.” The resulting residence, set into a mountainside overlooking downtown

Hendersonville, North Carolina, manages to meet all their specifications with grace and simplicity.

The origins of the owners’ eclectic architectural tastes go back two generations to a grandfather who studied with Frank Lloyd Wright and worked as an apprentice

to architect Walter Burley Griffin in Australia.

The owners cultivated their affinity for Japanese design when three separate career assignments took them to Tokyo, where they lived a total of ten years and collected most of their favorite furniture and art works.