

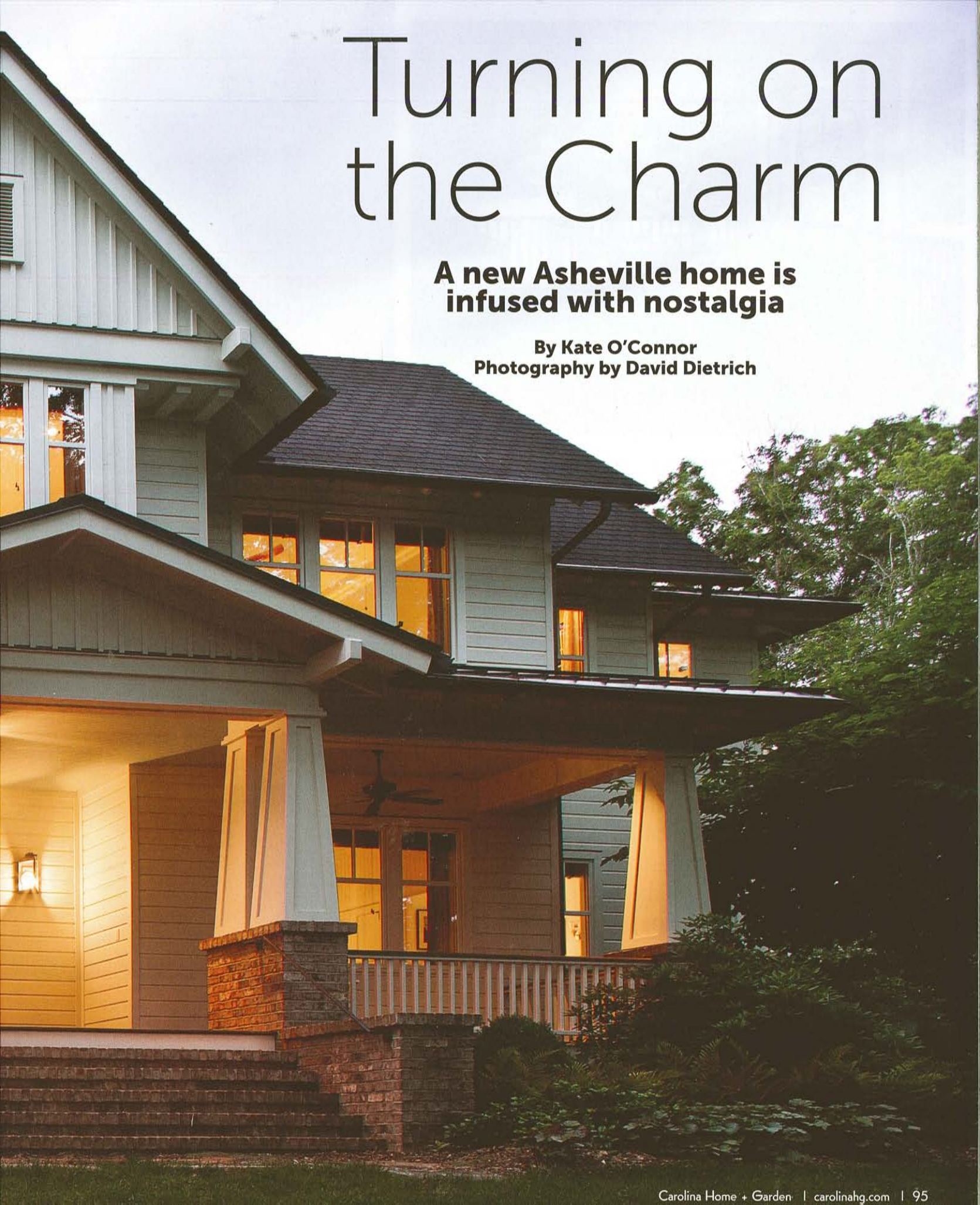
Designed by Al and Parker Platt and built by  
Parker Construction, the Orecks' residence  
The Ramble incorporates elements of a  
classic, Southern small-town home, but also  
features a carefully concealed solar power  
array, radiant heat and a strategic layout that  
maximizes ambient light.



# Turning on the Charm

**A new Asheville home is  
infused with nostalgia**

**By Kate O'Connor  
Photography by David Dietrich**





Adjacent to the living room, an expansive screened dining porch welcomes guests with the old-fashioned charm of a vernacular, pale blue beadboard ceiling and a brick fireplace. The large, Derutta olive oil jar was collected during the family's travels in Italy.

Architects, builders and interior designers can work magic. They can take the dreams and visions of prospective homeowners and, through some alchemy, make them manifest. They solve all the technical problems to create an exquisite framework — a stage upon which we can enjoy the days of our lives. But there is one thing they simply cannot do. They cannot imbue a structure with the exquisite, amorphous quality of a home that is lived in and loved; the *joie de vivre*. This is up to those who inhabit the space, and in this regard, Tom and Toni Oreck are expert.





The living room features a deft blend of color and texture to create a family-friendly environment that is functional and stylish. Having established the color palette with the large custom rug, designer Kathryn Long reupholstered some of the Orecks' existing furniture in chenille and velvet and added crewel draperies for a light touch. A retractable television that lowers from the ceiling, maintains the nostalgic sensibility.



Thanks to an abundance of open shelves, Toni Oreck never needs to search for items in her walk-in pantry, which can be entered from the kitchen or from the garage side hallway. Architects Al and Parker Platt included ample counter space for unloading bags of groceries...or for brewing up some espresso.

Of course, their expertise guides them to select a trusted team of professionals to aid them. A dream team, as it were. When they decided to relocate their family from Nashville, TN to a new home to be constructed on a site comprised of several contiguous lots in The Ramble, they enlisted architects Al and Parker Platt and interior designer Kathryn Long, ASID of Ambiance Interiors who had worked with them on their mountain retreat near Burnsville (featured in the Summer 2009 issue of *Carolina Home + Garden*), and builder Marc Tyner of Tyner Construction.

It was to be, first and foremost, a family home: charming, rambling and immanently livable. "We focused on Toni, Tom and their kids and how they wanted to live in the house," says Parker Platt. "The aesthetic was informed by Toni's love of all those great old Asheville houses — simple and old fashioned, right down to the 'trick-or-treater' front porch".

"Toni knew the mood she wanted," notes Kathryn Long, "It was that of the houses built from the 1920s to the 1940s. We came to call it 'Between the Two Wars.' She wanted the comfortable feeling of a home that had been there for a long time. It was a period-inspired envelope."

With its brick foundation, tapered porch columns, gables and cheerful, white-and-black painted exterior, the house has the nostalgic sensibility of the "classic, Southern small-town home," as Al Platt describes it. But this belies the very modern green technology that has been integrated into its design, meticulously realized by Tyner Construction.

The home is heated by geo-thermal and solar radiant heat beneath the quarter-sawn oak floors. The structure is carefully oriented to provide privacy for the family's outdoor areas — particularly the pool — but to capture maximum sunlight for an array of photovoltaic panels on the roof and to illuminate the interiors. "From an energy



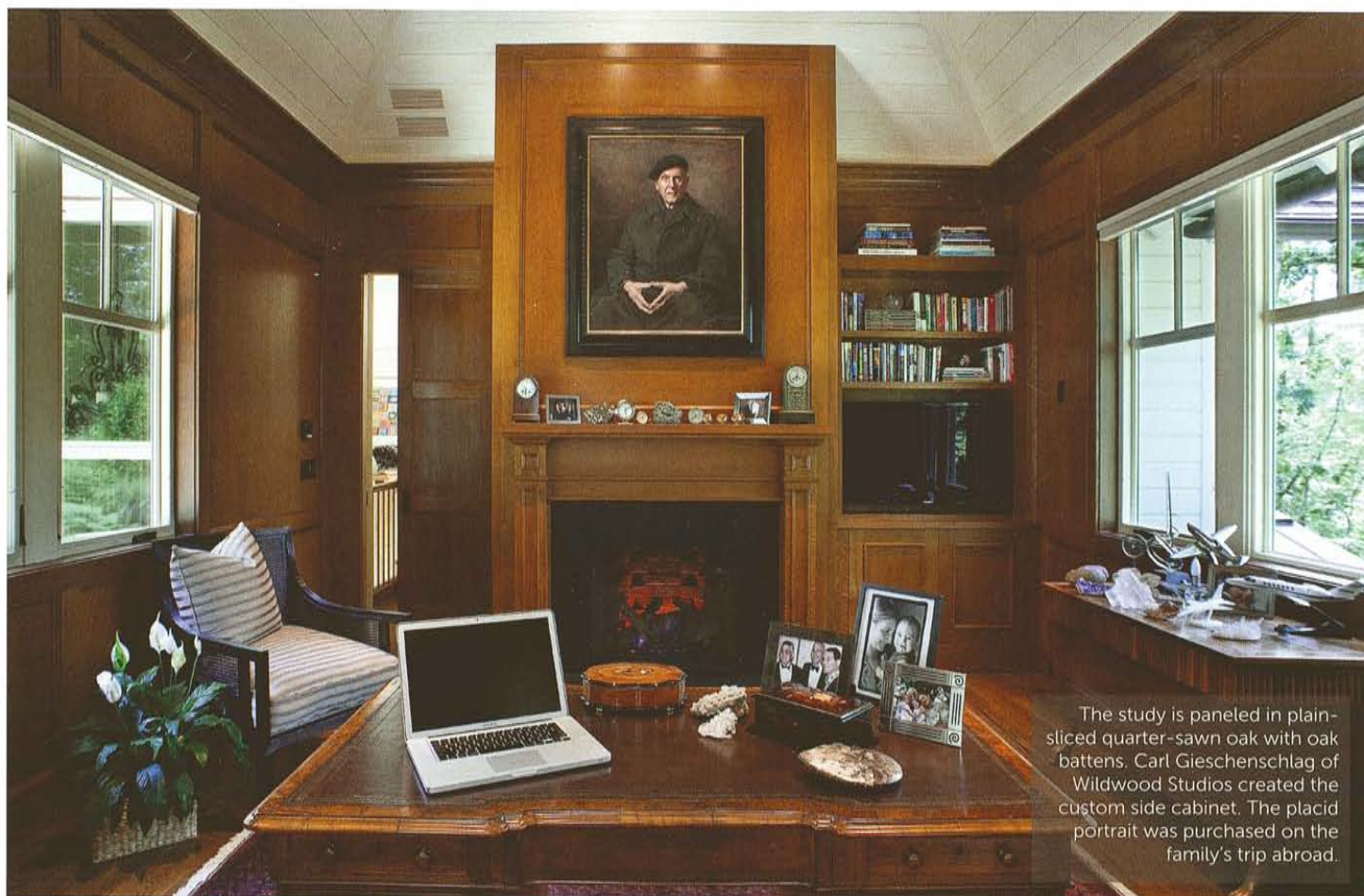
The Pickwick paneled dining room has a period feel, but provides a suitable backdrop for several pieces of the Orecks' collection of contemporary art. The centerpiece is a table by local artist Randy Shull. In the kitchen, Wildwood Studios fashioned the custom cabinetry, appliances and fixtures are by Ferguson, Mountain Marble provided the island's marble and the quartz composite countertops.

standpoint, the house is really efficient," notes Al Platt. "The rooms that radiate out from the center are one room deep. During a normal day, anywhere in the house you don't have to turn on a light." Sun tubes drop into the interior's low light areas, such as hallways and baths, to supplement the light provided by the windows.

From a practical standpoint, the layout of the house has been organized to be ergonomically efficient for the family, which includes three school-age children. Platt's plan includes a formal, Pickwick paneled entry with an impressive oak staircase and wrought iron chandelier, but the Orecks — and their visitors — tend to use the garage side back entry, where the tiled mudroom offers plenty of open storage for coats, sports equipment, school books and shoes.

The main floor is command central for the family and their casual lifestyle. Toni's airy corner kitchen — with its cheerful white cabinetry and open-shelf storage fashioned by Carl Gieschenschlag of Wildwood Studios — affords her direct views of the dining and living room areas and allows her to keep an eye on the activities in the pool below. The nearby walk-through pantry is just steps away from the back entry and offers a convenient counter for unloading groceries and ample storage for food and kitchenwares.

The home offers the children areas for quiet time and for gathering, exploration and play. An art studio and a fully equipped game room in the downstairs area — adjacent to the pool terrace and a low-maintenance cabana area for showering off — are favorite hangouts when groups of friends visit. Upstairs, the youngsters enjoy an entire floor of



The study is paneled in plain-sliced quarter-sawn oak with oak battens. Carl Giesenschlag of Wildwood Studios created the custom side cabinet. The placid portrait was purchased on the family's trip abroad.



Interior designer Kathryn Long of Ambiance Interiors assisted the Orecks in creating a home that had a sensibility of the 1920s-1940s. The use of black and white ceramic tiles — employed in varying patterns — for the baths throughout the residence reinforces that theme.

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In the master suite, period appropriate wooden plantation style shades mute the light, while crewel fabric curtains with a Tree of Life pattern provide textural interest. The bed is by Woodland — nightstands by Kerr Designs.



private space, with cheerful pink and purple bedrooms for the girls and a pirate-themed hideaway for the son, along with a TV/play area where they can come together.

The adults, too, have their retreats, including a serene master bedroom suite with wooden plantation blinds and a stately, wood-paneled office for Tom, complete with a fireplace and leather-topped desk, somewhat removed from the more public areas, which are often filled with rambunctious activity.

The challenge for interior designer Kathryn Long

was to give the entire residence a relaxed, comfortable feel while imparting a sense of continuity, grace and sophistication. She utilized a thoughtful selection of furnishings transported from their former residence, refreshed with new upholstery, along with new pieces chosen for the new project. "They had wonderful art in their home in Nashville," Long recalls. "Once the plan was established, and we started to work on material selections, we cataloged everything in the Nashville house to determine what we would bring. It allowed us to



The serene grotto pool by Medallion Pool of Asheville is an engineering marvel. Geothermal heating allows the Orecks to use the pool for an extended season with lower operating costs. An automated cover is completely concealed by the granite wall at the flick of a switch.



The Oreck family enjoys a fresh pizza, right out of the wood-fired outdoor oven at their home in The Ramble. They developed a taste for all things Italian during a yearlong visit — concurrent with the construction of their new residence — and have integrated many mementos of their trip into the décor.

plan specific spots for the art.”

Meanwhile, the Orecks were busy collecting new treasures and memorabilia on a yearlong family trip to Italy, which was concurrent with the building of the Ramble house. Some of the ephemera from their travels now graces the walls of the downstairs powder room, fashioned into a fanciful collage by decorative painter Lena Farkas, who also applied the faux finishes throughout the house.

Drawing on a palette geared to Toni’s preferred period, Long has dressed the home in beautifully detailed, tactile, yet durable fabrics: chenille, velvet and crewel. The baths are outfitted in classic, black and white tile, varying the patterns while staying true to the aesthetic premise.

But the overriding theme, of course, is the buoyant character of the family. “It was a lift to my spirits that they were building such a light, fresh, inviting and approachable house,” observes Al Platt. “The family took to it like ducks to water. They’ve decorated it enthusiastically and they occupy every inch of it. They use it hard and share it easily. It’s an encouraging house.”