

TUDOR WITH A TWIST

A storybook cottage
in Biltmore Forest

By Kate O'Connor
Photography by David Dietrich

Some houses are just special. It isn't about state-of-the-art accoutrements or opulence or grandeur. It's almost metaphysical. It's the feel of the place that engages you. A certain character—an "energy," if you will.

Some houses have soul.

Julie and Marty Monroe's cottage in Biltmore Forest is such a house. Stepping onto the little covered portico, with its stained glass window, and walking through the arched front door, you sense it. It's like an embrace...it makes your shoulders relax.

Designed by William Waldo Dodge, the Monroes' 1930s Biltmore Forest cottage evokes the vernacular architecture of the Cotswolds or Bavaria. Interior designer Linda Constable of Ambiance Interiors playfully defines it as "Tudor with a twist."





"We knew it immediately," says Julie. "There was nothing we didn't love about this house, from the aura to the view from every window." Marty concurs. "We didn't need soaring ceilings and endless expanse. The size and the styling of the house really appealed to us."

Built in 1931, the structure was designed by architect William Waldo Dodge, who was also a gifted silversmith with a shop in Biltmore Village. One might describe the aesthetic as "storybook"—reminiscent of the Cotswolds or Bavaria. Linda Constable of Ambiance Interiors, who guided the Monroes in the home's interior design, playfully refers to it as "Tudor with a twist."

"It was very important to honor the spirit of the house," notes Constable. "We wanted to respect the era, to make everything feel authentic and appropriate. We paid particular attention to the scale of the furnishings." Sensitive to the wooded setting and aware of the Monroes' affinity for nature, she looked to natural forms, shapes and colors in choosing the home's appointments. Images of flora and fauna would become a subtle unifying theme throughout the residence.

Constable began by setting a subdued palette based on a selection of Tufenkian oriental rugs, which have the aged effect of treasured heirloom carpets. Shades of cream, rose, ochre and gold underscore the bold architectural statement of the ebonized cypress beams and trim in the main floor rooms. "We wanted a gentle flow of color," she explains. "Nothing too glaring. Julie and Marty collect wonderful art, so we chose fabrics and colors that wouldn't overwhelm the artwork."

To offset the neutral hues, the designer employed the art of mixing pattern and texture. Rough linen window shades peek from behind raw silk Duralee draperies dressed with delicate embroidery and appliqués of leaves. The sofa is wrapped in velvety chenille, lush jacquards dress the chairs in the living and dining

Elegance and ease define the intimate dining room. A Tufenkian carpet sets the stage, imparting the impression of a treasured family heirloom. Custom bench-made Bausman cupboard, table and chairs have the handcrafted look of fine antiques. The gold damask slipcover fabric is by Lee Industries.



Dark cypress beams and trim create a graphic backdrop in the living room. The whimsical, hand-carved mantel above the fireplace depicts a foxhunt. The cocktail table and side table are by Woodland Furniture. Sunburst mirror is from Carver's Guild. Draperies are by Bianca's Stitch Works.

A flight of butterfly specimens (from the estate of Janet Gaynor) leads the way from the foyer to the second level. The runners are by Stark, custom made in England from a design that was originally intended for use in Pullman train cars.





Perfect for tea on a balmy evening, the tiled screen porch offers a cozy conversation area appointed with a Palecek wicker grouping fitted with comfortable cushions upholstered in Giati fabric.



On the former sleeping porch, Marty Monroe has created a discophile's paradise — a library of classic vinyl records, safely housed in a custom cabinet by Chris Perryman of Goldsplinter Woodworking and built-in shelving by Anderson Brothers. The twin camel-saddle stools are from Relics Antiques.



Tucked into a corner of the kitchen, a cozy breakfast nook is the ideal spot to linger over morning coffee. William Morris side chairs by Bausman with Dogwood and Kravet fabric cushions flank an antique drop leaf tea table from Village Antiques. The custom wine rack is by Goldsplinter Woodworking Studio.

rooms and wrought iron fixtures punctuate the space. The effect is plush, but not precious — and eminently livable. “The mandate that we gave Linda was that it had to be comfortable,” Marty recalls. “We didn’t want to live in a museum. We didn’t want to just look at it — we wanted to enjoy it.”

In keeping with the home’s relaxed sensibility, Constable blended antique furnishings from Village Antiques and Stuf Antiques with custom, bench-made pieces from Bausman & Company, which were artfully distressed. “Everything has the sense of having been here for quite awhile,” she says.

“You want to sit and spend time in these rooms.”

Or you might want to walk up the angled staircase, past the flight of butterfly specimens that sweeps you along (the entomological collection is from the estate of actress Janet Gaynor) to the private spaces on the second floor. You’ll find a bit more whimsy here, like the exuberant, cranberry and white “Bird and Thistle” fabric and wallpaper by Brunswick & Fils that swaths the bed and bath of the Monroes’ college-age daughter, Deanna. The master bedroom is dressed in more sedate hues and patterns, but again showcases Constable’s deft hand with tactile layering.



Cranberry and white "Bird and Thistle" wallpaper and fabric by Brunswick & Fils create a sense of enchantment in the daughter's bedroom. The bench-made furnishings are by Woodland. All window treatments and bedding by Bianca's Stitch Works.

The petite downstairs powder room is enlivened by a silver Sanderson wallpaper with a motif of squirrels and doves, with a delicate Schumacher floral paper on the ceiling. Inverted pleats on the Kravet linen vanity surround are by Bianca's Stitch Works.



The master bath, with its marble floor, is a sympathetic later addition designed by architect Robert Griffin that incorporates the original outer wall of the house and features a walk-in shower within a turret.



The master bedroom is an oasis of serenity, dressed in soft gray and taupe, accented with rich accents of rust. The armoire, headboard and night tables are Bausman. The upholstered bench is Charles Stewart, upholstered in Beacon Hill fabric. Window treatments are by Bianca's Stitch Works.



The Monroes' private studies have a more eclectic feel that reflects their personalities while remaining consistent and appropriate within the context of the home. Julie's personal space is bathed in light, with a stylish, silk upholstered "peacock" chair nestled up to her antique, trestle table desk. Marty's "man cave" features alligator patterned hassocks, leather theatre chairs and a massive, custom cabinet by Chris Perryman of Goldsplinter to

house some of his treasured, vintage vinyl records.

The house accommodates its residents with both intimate spaces — the cozy corner window seat in the kitchen with its tiny drop-leaf tea table — and places for gathering — the ample family room, just off the kitchen with an inviting, L-shaped sofa or the outdoor terrace with a stone fireplace where friends and family can enjoy summer evenings or marvel at the extraordinary blaze

of bright red maples in autumn. There is even a cozy studio down the stepping stone path where Julie, an accomplished jewelry artist, can practice her craft.

Yes, there is a little touch of magic in it — the whimsical carvings that one discovers on the front façade and above the fireplace, the hidden pass-through door from the cedar closets in Deanna's room to her bath, the little skylight in the upstairs hallway. The house's personality

shines through...not imposing, but always present. Welcoming and beneficent, the structure itself seemed to guide Constable and the Monroes in creating an enchanting home.

"Once we got started, it moved along very quickly," notes Constable. "Everything seemed to soar on the wings of angels. There's a joyful thing about the way we worked together. The house was always singing to everybody."