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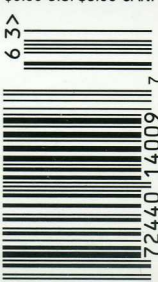
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A Perfect Balance

A NEW HOME IN HOUSTON'S TANGLEWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD
MELDS MODERN-DAY FASHION WITH CLASSIC TUDOR STYLE.

Writer and field editor: Susan Fox Photographer: Jeff McNamara

THIS PHOTO Designers wanted the stair hall to feel like an updated version of the 1920s Tudor style that fostered a high level of formality. The block paneling, which ordinarily would be stained dark, is painted a crisp white to keep the room light and simple. OPPOSITE Massive alder-and-glass doors open to the foyer. The light's silk shade and bronze base hint at the interior's mix.





One of Houston's parklike esplanades, shaded by a canopy of live oaks and graced with benches along a manicured path of crushed granite, offered architectural designer Robert Dame the city's equivalent to the English countryside. "I was inspired by the natural setting and the desire to do a Tudor-style house," says Dame, whose childhood surroundings and a coveted book collection on English architecture left to him by his late grandfather nurtured his interests and talents. Growing up on Chicago's south side, where Tudor revival homes reigned at the turn of the 20th century, exposed Dame to the style of house Thompson Custom Homes of Houston wanted to showcase.

"The beauty of this project was that it was done on 'spec,'" says Dame, meaning the floor plan and style represented his expression entirely, not that of a client. Like an artist lured by an empty canvas, he produced what he describes as a "spontaneous design" in tandem with interior design firm Bellacasa Design Associates, which handled the furnishings and interior finishes. It worked perfectly for a home that would become a study in balance.

The exterior stays true to the American interpretation of the English style. A prominent front-facing gable decorated in half timbers and stucco gives way to the mostly brick exterior accentuated by a hand-carved doorway and limestone window casings. Windows are central to this home's character and Dame's design. In typical Tudor fashion, he chose a mix of styles: diamond-cut leaded-glass units in the master bedroom, casements in the kitchen, and a series of mulled (connected) windows at the staircase.

A clean-lined sofa is paired with an upholstered roll-arm floral in an effort to create a balance of masculine and feminine styles in the library. "There's nothing too heavy looking in this room," says designer Kelly Welsh, who wanted a subtly English look that wasn't too dark.





CREATE A CUSTOM LOOK

Built-in bookcases filled with favorite volumes and art pieces give a room exquisite personal style. In this library, brass art light fixtures and a classic block design in the woodwork create a rich look. The designers chose what they call a medium stain that is traditional yet comfortable.



Asymmetrical floor plans like this mean Tudor homes have windows here and there, anywhere a homeowner could enjoy the view. "We wanted to work toward that (same philosophy)," Dame says.

The kitchen windows look out to the boulevard or back to the pool beyond a cozy window seat. Windows at the top of the stairs allow someone at the master bedroom's entry to enjoy the view out to the esplanade. A bank of half-glass doors in the formal dining room opens to a casual porch that parallels the esplanade. "There are a lot of cross-axes in this house," Dame says. And with these come delightfully revealed subtleties. Aside from nature, vistas within the house celebrate each room's special quality or architectural detail.

A back staircase from the upper-level bedrooms, for instance, leads down to a sun-kissed breakfast room further warmed by a stone fireplace. In the formal library, the view extends beyond the entry to an elegant stair hall and white block paneling framing a large window.

Indeed, views from room to room are beautiful and distinctive. "The interior of the home isn't typically English Tudor," says Bellacasa's Kevin Spearman, whose responsibilities included selecting furniture, designing cabinetry, and choosing paints and stains. "We wanted a traditional

ABOVE Club chairs upholstered in silk and leather sit on the great-room side of the fireplace. A limed pine ceiling evokes a country air. RIGHT Silk wallpaper and velvet draperies give the dining room a formal air when desired. Connected to a porch, it "offers a great balance between casual and formal living," designer Kevin Spearman says.



CREATE A CUSTOM LOOK

The chandelier is a dining room's shining star, and with good reason: Elegant lighting is the perfect complement to a fine meal. Here, a pair of antique fixtures of appropriate scale were refurbished and hung with dramatic results.





look that had been restored—one that conveyed a fresh, modern-day feel,” Spearman says. “We kept the woodwork clean; we didn’t want a lot of ornamentation.”

For example, the stairwell’s block paneling, a feature characteristic of Tudor style, is painted white rather than treated to a dark stain. And its handrail denotes a simple rather than heavy iron detail. “We wanted to keep this house traditional and classic,” says designer Kelly Welsh, who worked with Spearman. “But we also wanted to update it in surprising ways.”

The updated traditional approach continued throughout the house, with the designers mixing painted finishes and dark stains, using marble alongside modern appliances, and combining antiques with chic new furnishings.

Welsh admits that finding the most appropriate paint color for the walls was a challenge for her team, who

ABOVE AND LEFT Two islands define the kitchen zones: The one with a cabinet base is for food prep, the one styled like a table for serving or visiting with the chef. Stainless-steel appliances offer a modern twist. OPPOSITE The fireplace by the kitchen’s breakfast area melds a smooth limestone surround with a more rustic patterned-stone wall.



RIGHT An upholstered bed, a pair of gold birdcagelike light fixtures, and a limed pine ceiling give the master bedroom a luxuriously lofty look.

BELOW A Tudor arch passage into the master bath's dressing area provides a quiet reminder of the home's timeless English touches.

BOTTOM The master bath's tub sits in the middle of a shiny walnut floor. Cabinet doors are mirrored and fitted with crisp X-motif millwork.



wanted to stay away from heavy Tudor-inspired colors, such as browns, yellows, and golds. "It took some time, but we eventually knew white was right," she says.

"English homes tend to have a very heavy feel," Spearman adds. "This one offers a good balance of masculine and feminine influences."

The library offers one of the clearest examples of the balance between antique and up-to-date. A rolled-arm sofa in a floral print pairs beautifully with a more modern, streamlined cousin. Besides creating a comfortable mix, it suggests that collections were assembled over time. The dining room pairs new and old, as well, but in terms of lifestyle. Long velvet draperies offer formality, but a bank of glass doors opening to a porch takes the room more casual. "Our vision was to be true to the way people live today," Welsh says. Adds Spearman, "The architecture gives it a timeless feel, and the interior selections give it an edge, a modern-day style." **BH**

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THE WARM DETAIL of Tudor-style homes built throughout the United States at the turn of the last century inspired this home's architectural design. The plan's spaces range from an elegant library to a gourmet kitchen to a spacious loggia, suiting a range of functions, formal to casual.



MAIN LEVEL SQ. FT.: 3,306

UPPER LEVEL SQ. FT.: 3,693

BEDROOMS: 4

BATHROOMS: 4 full, 2 half



UPPER LEVEL



MAIN LEVEL