



Happy Together

A SEATTLE ARCHITECT
BALANCES MODERN AND
TRADITIONAL ELEMENTS
FOR A HOME WHERE
COMFORT TRUMPS ALL

WRITTEN BY AMY ELBERT PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN GRANEN PRODUCED BY LINDA HUMPHREY



Living room The planks and beams of the living room ceiling are rift and quartered white oak that was bleached and hand-waxed.
Back exterior French doors in the living room open to a back terrace overlooking the golf course. A waterfall flows down the terrace steps into a water course that is lighted at night.
Preceding pages Quartzite slabs were cut into large-scale tiles for the foyer floor. Arched openings at the end of the hall lead to the living room. The painting above the mantel is by Betsy Eby. A motorized system raises the TV from the console to the left of the fireplace.



Architects are famous for their freshly pressed white shirts, obsessive attention to detail, and “my way or the highway” personalities. But after more than 25 years as an architect—and nearly as many as a husband—Stuart Silk knows that a successful home design as well as a happy marriage requires good communication and plenty of give and take.

“I’m very much a transitional kind of guy. I could live in a flat-roof modern quite comfortably,” Stuart says, adding with a chuckle, “That will never happen in this marriage.”

His wife, Mary, is a “dyed-in-the-wool traditionalist,” Stuart explains, and is drawn to cozy spaces with wood-burning fireplaces, textured fabrics, and richly hued colors. “I know Stuart would love to build a contemporary house, but they don’t seem comfortable, they don’t envelop me,” Mary says.

Happily, their seemingly opposite visions blended beautifully when the empty nesters built an environmentally responsible house on a lot overlooking fairways at Seattle’s Broadmoor Golf Club.

From the start, it was a joint effort, with Stuart wearing his professional hat. “He treated me as a client and asked me what I wanted,”



Mary says. For inspiration, the couple collected images from books and magazines. They drove through neighborhoods in Seattle and elsewhere, pointing out houses, landscapes, and architectural details that appealed to them.

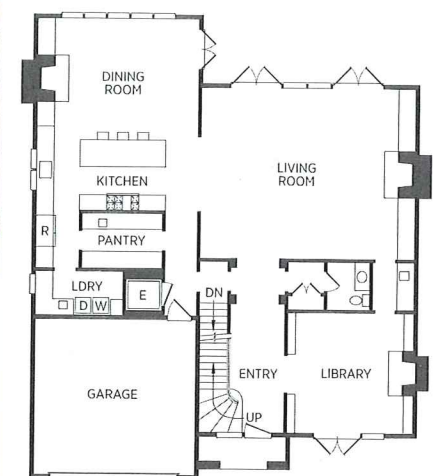
Reaching a consensus on the exterior was easy. "We wanted a lot of glass, but we still wanted the house to have a traditional appearance on the outside," Stuart says. Influenced by rustic farmhouse styles ("something you'd see in southern Europe or more likely Santa Barbara," the architect says), the three-level stucco home has a tile roof and wood shutters that were wire-brushed and stained—"so they feel like they're 100 years old," he says.

A front courtyard features paving stones set on a gravel base that allows small plants to sprout in the joints. "It's more informal, countrified a little bit," Stuart says. French doors on the back of the house open to the golf course and views of the Cascade mountain

Library The most traditional room on the main floor, the library has painted, paneled walls, a plush rug, and textured upholstery. French doors open to the front courtyard. **Front terrace** An east-facing terrace is a delightful spot to sit in the afternoon. **Front entrance** Sandstone pavers lead to a stone-look archway made with stucco. **Homeowners** Mary and Stuart Silk.



Second Floor



Main Level

peaks beyond. Stuart considered sets of bifold doors to open the back of the house but decided they looked too modern. “We wanted to keep that old-world feel,” he says.

A narrow course of water centered on the living room wing of the house bisects the backyard, adding a stunning lighted water feature at night—and a fun play spot for grandkids during the day.

While the exterior design choices were made early, Stuart’s approach from the start was to design “from the inside out,” he says. “We built the house to accommodate the way we live, so we were concerned with spatial relationships, adjacencies, views, and light. Those are the things that informed the exterior of the house.”

Dining room A wall of windows and French doors that lead to the back terrace ensure the room receives ample natural light. A custom pine table and an antique lantern lend a casual air to the dining area, which opens to the kitchen. The artwork above the fireplace is by Brian Blackham.

Kitchen Stuart limited the number of upper cabinets and eliminated a sink on the island to downplay the utilitarian features of the kitchen because the room is visible from the living and dining areas. The refrigerator, wall ovens, and microwave are partially out of view in a side corridor. In a nice juxtaposition of modern and traditional, the rectilinear stainless-steel hood is flanked by blue and white ginger jars.

The interiors reflect Stuart’s contemporary leanings with walls of windows and French doors and a casual open floor plan, where rooms flow one into another. “We wanted contiguous spaces, so the main living space is quite open to the kitchen, and the kitchen opens to the dining room,” Stuart says. “The only room that is separate on the main floor is the library, and we can close that off with pocket doors.” Not surprisingly, that cozy room with a wood-burning fireplace, painted wood-paneled walls, and furnishings upholstered in textured and patterned fabrics is Mary’s favorite.

Other interior walls were finished with wheat-colored Venetian plaster for an aged and handmade look. The inspiration for the oak floors and ceilings came from a book showcasing vintage French homes, Mary recalls. To create the subtle warm effect the Silks wanted, the rift and quartered white oak was bleached to remove its yellow tones, and ceilings were hand-finished with a paste wax.

The overall palette and design sensibility are definitely minimal, Stuart says, with no one feature or colorway demanding attention. “Everything conforms and is harmonious—even though there are stone floors, steel railings, Venetian plaster, waxed wood, and painted cabinets. We have a richness, a mosaic of materials, but we

FLOOR PLANS: CARSON ODE



Remember when...

Green was just a color 25 years ago, but today green often refers to environmentally friendly designs and products. Rating systems such as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) help architects and designers create buildings that conserve resources and minimize impact on the environment.

Seattle architect Stuart Silk received a LEED Gold rating for his new home, incorporating systems such as radiant floor heating, high-efficiency windows and doors, energy-saving appliances, low-VOC finishes and adhesives, and multiple water-conservation systems.

Green design and products are more available today and prices are coming down, but consumers’ decisions are financially driven, Stuart says. “It used to be emotional. Not anymore. Clients won’t embrace anything unless they know it makes economic sense.”



Master bedroom After the oak vaulted ceiling was installed, Stuart couldn't bear to cut holes for down lights. Instead, the Silks rely on table lamps, sconces, and natural light. "People tend to overlight bedrooms. They should be a place to wind down," Stuart says. The "Medici" bed from Kreiss is skirted with "Rayure Marionettes" fabric from Clarence House. **Back exterior:** Balconies are at the master bedroom windows.



made a conscious decision not to have any one thing shout, be boisterous, or stand out. The palette is muted."

Mary worked with interior designer Danielle Krieg to choose fabrics to re-cover existing furnishings and to find new pieces, such as a custom pine plank table suited to the more casual style of their dining room, with its doors to the terrace and golf course views.

Most of the time, Stuart and Mary were in sync, but there were a few surprises, such as when Mary announced she wanted a blue bathroom. "I'd been doing a muted color scheme in my mind," Stuart says. He initially objected but eventually acquiesced.

Stuart had a victory in the kitchen, however, when he eliminated the sink on the island to create a sleek, non-kitchen look. "Mary still gives me a hard time about that," he says, laughing.

Differences were amicably resolved with the help of their stash of inspirational photos. "If we got into trouble or didn't agree on something, we'd go back to the image book," Stuart says. "We'd look through those images, talk, and find a way to agree." Give and take, push and pull—that's what makes for good design and happy marriages. ■

Architect: Stuart Silk **Interior designers:** Mary Silk with Danielle Krieg

For more information, see sources on page 156