

The design of Charlie Hayes's Arts and Crafts-inspired home blends historic features, modern necessities, and an appreciation for craftsmanship. The custom-made leaded glass panes, by Studio B Stained Glass in Dallas, are inset into standard double-paned Marvin windows, so beauty isn't compromised by energy efficiency.



English



Arts and Crafts

TEXT BY J. ROBERT OSTERGAARD PHOTOS BY JAMES YOCHUM

Sandra Vitzthum designs a new old house in Michigan well suited for her client's collection of antiques.



If I were asked to say what is at once the most important production of art and the thing most to be longed for, I should answer, a beautiful house.

When William Morris wrote these words in 1892, it was in his native England and Queen Victoria was on the throne. Over a century later and half a world away—on the eastern shore of Lake Michigan—Sandra Vitzthum, AIA, and her client, Charlie Hayes, took to heart Morris's words and embraced the essential philosophy of the Arts and Crafts Movement that he founded. The result is a new old house that blends contemporary sensibilities and necessities with a historic sensitivity and an appreciation of time-honored craftsmanship.

English Arts and Crafts was a design revolution that began in the late nineteenth century and was promulgated by visionary tastemakers: William Morris, Philip Webb, Edwin Lutyens, and C.F.A. Voysey, among others. It was a reformist movement that grew out of its adherents' distaste for inauthentic, overwrought, and mass-produced Victorian design. The Industrial Revolution gave the Victorians plenty of shoddy, gaudy, factory-made goods and architectural embellishments, but—in the opinion of the Arts and Crafts founders—it failed to improve the character of individuals or of English society. Webb and many of his contemporaries set out to change that.

Part of the remedy, they argued,

Right Vitzthum created the kitchen as the back wall of the dining room (left) to accommodate Hayes's request that the two rooms be combined for ease of entertaining. Lights in both rooms are reproductions from Conant Custom Brass and are re-created from a Catskills porch light. The sideboard is a Stickley piece, and the dining room table was designed by the owner.



This is the house of a collector, so display areas abound. In the dining room, the high wainscoting is topped by a plate rail. It was based on a similar detail found in the historic home of the late Swedish artist Carl Larsson.

was to reintroduce humans into the design process in the form of skilled craftsmen working closely with enlightened architects, designers, and homeowners. Morris believed that successful design derived from a knowledge of and appreciation for all the elements that make up a home and a passion for the handicraft that produces it. Anything that did not bear the authentic mark of human hands was eschewed, and all design elements were selected to

work in concert celebrating the natural and useful properties of a home. Or, as Vitzthum succinctly puts it, "It's all about the nature of the materials and the simplicity and clarity of intention."

Carriage House Classic

For Hayes's house, Vitzthum created a structure reminiscent of an early twentieth-century carriage house—a suitable choice as Hayes stores his collection of English racing cars here. Its exterior is notable for its integrity, unity, and completeness in the massing of forms. Three dormers above and two garages flanking the ground floor lend balance, and the regular placement of leaded glass windows, including a central bay window, strengthens the conceit. The few ornamental flourishes are logical outgrowths of the overall plan. The first floor





is sheathed in a double course of cedar shingles, with the top course protruding slightly over the course below, giving a strong shadow line and grounding the house. The diamond course skirt delineates the second story, and the single course of shingles above gives a finer finish as well as a sense of lightness that contrasts to the rusticated ground floor. No doubt Morris would have approved of Vitzthum's clever use of natural, regionally appropriate materials.

Inspired Style

"On entering, the visitor encounters a small, intentionally dark entry hall. It's a place of rest and also of transition. It's supposed to be cool and restful after being outside," Vitzthum says. "You arrive and relax and then climb the stairs." The staircase is perhaps the most important interior architectural detail. It was designed by Vitzthum, handmade by Bruce LaRose of Custom Millwork in Barre, Vermont, and inspired by the stairs at Red House, the home Philip Webb designed for Morris in 1859. Like the spires of a cathedral illuminated by light filtering down from above, the hand-turned newel posts beckon the eye and the visitor upwards. "The overall organization of the house is very vertical," Vitzthum says. This is not an idle notion, but a practical decision. "The main living areas are upstairs, in part because this is a lakefront home,"

Left and Above The voluptuous fireplace was made from Indiana limestone and designed and constructed with the assistance of the International Masonry Institute. The fire screen was handcrafted of bronze and iron and is flanked by late-nineteenth-century Bradley Hubbard andirons. Its grand scale and placement speak to the hearth as the center of the home. The living room floors are southern yellow pine covered by "Wightwick Manor," a Morris & Co. rug reproduced by Michael FitzSimmons Decorative Arts.



Vitzthum explains, "so the views improve as you ascend."

The second floor is in the tradition of the *piano nobile*, the floor where the main reception rooms and primary bedrooms are located. In this case, the main staircase leads up into the two-story library. By bringing visitors into this room first, Vitzthum activates the space. "It seemed fitting to think of this room in the English sense of a hall: a

room that can be used for sitting and talking, and of course, storing books," she says. This is the home of a collector, Vitzthum notes, so she created a broad plate rail around the room to display Hayes's collection of terra-cotta and antique Romanian pottery. The windows are inset with early twentieth-century stained-glass medallions from Hayes's collection.

The adjacent living room is dominated by a 5-foot-high granite fireplace, an apt adornment considering the home's pronounced verticality. It also speaks to the hearth as the metaphorical and physical center of the home, Vitzthum explains, just as Morris would have advocated. The plate rail reappears here, albeit in a smaller scale. The staircase also reappears, but as an overhead balcony that can be reached only through a "hidden staircase" off the library. It reinforces the Arts and





Crafts design motif while reminding us of the demarcation between public and private interior spaces. The library is separated from the living room by a dividing wall, but Vitzthum opened it at the upper story and designed arched colonnettes to span the opening. In this way, the very modern idea of an open interior space is incorporated into a historically sensitive plan.

Modern Elements

Another example of modern ideas being interpreted in a traditional context is the combination dining room and kitchen. Like many homeowners today, Hayes appreciates being able to prepare a meal while partaking of the company of his dinner guests. Therefore, he asked for minimal separation between the formal dining area and the food-preparation area. Vitzthum accomplished this by making the kitchen the dining room's back wall. A custom-designed granite-topped island



Left and Above A guest room in Charlie Hayes's home is decorated with reproduction William Morris wallpaper and early twentieth-century antiques. Vitzthum incorporated a closet into the space.

serves as the dividing line between the two. A plate rail over the dining room's high wainscoting was another opportunity to display pieces from Hayes's many collections. For furnishings, Hayes chose pieces from his Stickley collection and—taking a tip perhaps from Morris—he designed the dining room table himself. Indeed, touring this new old house, it is clear that both owner and architect agree with another Morris proverb: “The secret of happiness lies in taking a genuine interest in

all the details of daily life, and in elevating them to art.” ^{NOH}

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For Resources, see page 102.

Historical Reference

Sandra Vitzthum drew inspiration for the Hayes Cottage from many progenitors of the English Arts and Crafts Movement, in particular architect Edwin Luytens. Born in London in 1869, Luytens based his designs on historical references within a local context both in terms of materials and building traditions—tenets of the Arts and Crafts philosophy. He designed Goddards in 1898–1900, and it is considered one of his best early houses. Vitzthum borrowed ideas from the common room's fireplace (right) with its brick arches, keystone, and stone corbelling for the family room fireplace at the Hayes Cottage.



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Hayes Residence



ARCHITECT SANDRA VITZTHUM

BEDROOMS: 3

BATHROOMS: 3

First Floor

- 1 GARAGE
- 2 ENTRY HALL
- 3 FAMILY ROOM
- 4 GARAGE
- 5 BACK HALL
- 6 SCREENED PORCH
- 7 DECK



Second Floor

- 1 MASTER BEDROOM
- 2 BEDROOM
- 3 LIBRARY
- 4 LIVING ROOM
- 5 DECK
- 6 DINING ROOM/KITCHEN
- 7 BEDROOM
- 8 SCREENED PORCH





Above The garage doors were fabricated by the LaRose family of Custom Millwork in Barre, Vermont. The circular detail in the bay window establishes a decorative theme employed in the home's interior staircase. *Left* Rather than a grand entrance, Vitzthum envisioned a small, restful entry room where the visitor transitions gently from the public into the private realm. The walls are covered in "Compton" wallpaper designed by William Morris and supplied—along with many of the period furnishings—by Michael FitzSimmons Decorative Arts in Chicago.