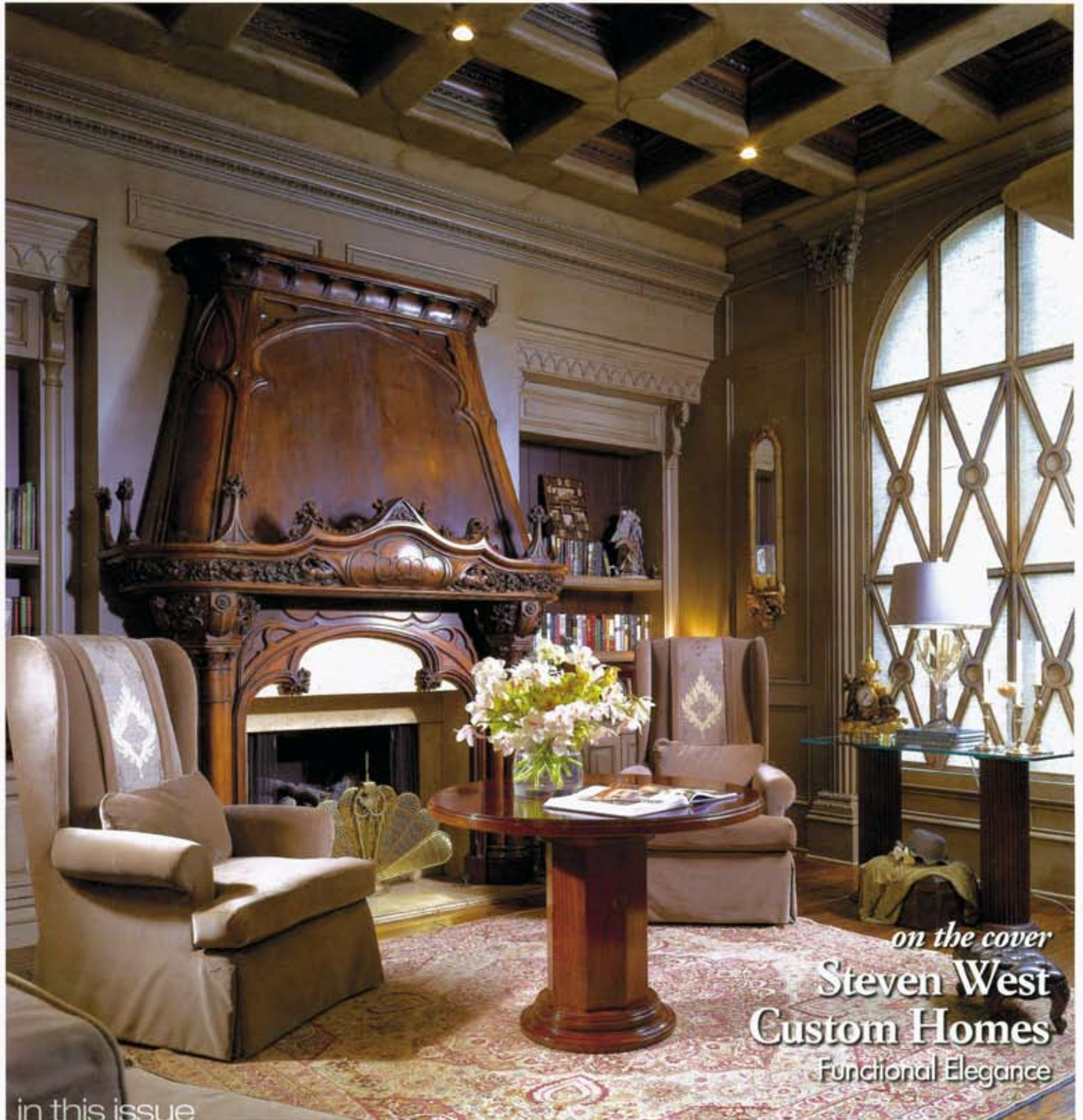


Today's CUSTOM HOME

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Main photo by John Umberger; inset courtesy of Harrison Design Associates. In a society that is looking for homes that have a sense of place, people are gravitating toward homes based on historical precedents. The design of this new home (main photo) was based on this historic residence (inset).



JOHN UMBERGER



Aymar Embury II designed this striking country estate in the 1930s. The Buckhead residence has become the heart of a community of new homes in complimentary architectural styles.

Future of Design Builds on Past

By Trish Stukbauer • Photography courtesy of John Umberger, Mikhail Boutchine, Jim Bartsch and Harrison Design Associates

It's an unfortunate side effect of modern life that we often feel disconnected – from families, neighbors and communities. "If you call your bank today, you can waste hours trying to get a live person on the phone, and when you do, you've reached a service center half way around the world, whereas we used to go to the local branch where we knew the teller. We've lost that personal connection. It can give you a disconnected feeling, like you don't have a sense of place or home," notes William H. Harrison, AIA, who founded award-winning architectural firm Harrison Design Associates.

In many ways, the design trends seen by Harrison and Gregory Palmer, AIA, the firm's East Coast Managing Principal, are bringing clients back in touch with the essential elements of life, whether that's reconnecting with each other or being vigilant stewards of the environment of which we are all a part. ►

Multipurpose areas are becoming more sought-after as homeowners seek to make the best use of every space in today's homes. This garage doubles as a game room, complete with a portable ping pong table.



JOHN LIMBERGER



Open floor plans like this provide plentiful options for casual entertaining.

In fact, going green is at the root of many trends. "There's an increasing emphasis on sustainability - even among clients who do not want to go through what can be a complex process of getting a home certified - that I call a practical greening. They are opting for geothermal heating and air, solar panels and higher efficiency equipment. They are looking at sourcing materials from within a 500-mile radius, so they're not expending tremendous amounts of energy to transport them. They're asking if materials are sustainable in and of themselves, for example by reusing antique wood instead of cutting new wood, and are looking for interior materials that don't emit volatile chemicals," Harrison notes.

"Across the board at every turn, clients are asking us to give due consideration to the environmental impact of the elements that are going into their homes," Palmer agrees.

Yet they are also paying more attention to where those homes are located. Part of that is a natural reaction to the rapidly increasing costs of commuting, but the monetary costs may not have as much impact as the emotional ones. "People are asking, 'what is the value of my time and what do I want to do with it?' That's been strengthened by the green movement," Harrison notes. "In part, it's a retaliation against the rise of suburban sprawl, which tried to reinvent the way people lived and worked. City planners envisioned separate living and working nodes connected by transportation arteries. What they discovered is people don't like to live like that, because they spend so much time commuting. If you spend two hours in your car every day, that's 10 hours a week, 500 plus hours a year, so you've in effect lost a couple of months of your life." ►

As a result, "there's a reverse flight toward urban areas, where more people are moving closer to work, both for the time savings and the environmental benefits of doing so," Palmer says. That has been spurring the growth of New Urbanism. "People want to live in a community where they can walk to things. They miss the old time concept of walking to the grocery store, and having a relationship with their neighbors," Palmer says. "People are yearning to have a sense of community," Harrison agrees.

"What that translates to architecturally is the majority of the people we work with want some kind of recognition of the past in their home's exteriors," Harrison attests. "They like traditional materials like brick and stone, which have the added benefit of being green. However, they want interiors that are much more open. Window sizes are much larger than in traditional styles, to allow in more natural light. Interiors are

more modern or contemporary, although there are vestiges of the classic in elements such as a stately fireplace with a nice mantel, yet the family room it sits in will be wide open."

The function behind the form goes back to the way modern families live. "Entertaining tends to be more casual. Most people don't have formal dinner parties. They have dinner parties, but they are strewn throughout the home, so there's a need for more open, flexible space. To that end, clients are viewing rooms as being multifunctional. Media rooms for example, are becoming a part of a family room or den. Clients are not interested in having separate rooms for everything that they only use twice a year. It's a better way to live, as far as not wasting energy and materials to create and condition unused space, but also because it makes the home seem lived in. Our clients want to use every room in their homes - if not daily, at least weekly," Harrison says.

The homes on these two pages are in the same neighborhood, which was built around a neighborhood green space designed to give residents a true feeling of community.



JOHN LIMBERGER



MIKHAIL BOUTCHINE

While the design of tomorrow's homes will certainly be influenced by changing lifestyles, the quest for sustainable materials and advances in technology, the desire to be surrounded by structures of timeless style will most certainly endure.

"People are also more concerned with livability and the quality of what they are getting. Ten or 20 years ago, they were looking at their homes to make a statement. They wanted more size and volume. Now, people don't mind smaller as long as smaller means more of a quality space."

That goes back to shifting demographics as affluent baby boomers age, Palmer believes. "We will be seeing the greatest transfer of wealth between the generations in U.S. history. We're seeing people who have already benefited from that. What they are looking for is not necessarily a larger home, but a quality home that manifests itself in details like the cladding components on the exterior and interior fit and finishes."

Of course, in a custom home perhaps more than in any

other endeavor, individual needs and tastes will always play the key role in design. Yet as we look toward the future, issues like increasing technology, decreasing resource accessibility, rising environmental awareness, and the desire to be surrounded by structures of enduring beauty are certain to play a role in how we live.



Harrison Design Associates includes a team of more than 85 architects and designers who believe the handcrafted custom home is an individual work of art. The award-winning firm offers site planning, design, interior design, landscape architecture and construction administration and management. For more information, call (404) 365-7760 or visit HarrisonDesignAssociates.com.