

OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

year completed: 2002

architect: MWA, Inc., Kurt Reinkens

builder: John Brink Construction, Inc.

interior architect: Brantner Design Associates

interior designer: Owner

square footage: 5,500

01: A Melding of Talents and Traditions

STORY chérie louise

PHOTOS vance fox

A STONE FLOOR IN THE ENTRYWAY HELPS ESTABLISH THE HOME'S EUROPEAN FLAVOR. THE OWNERS FLEW BOTH THE STONE AND THE STONE MASONS WHO INSTALLED IT OVER FROM FRANCE TO ENSURE AN AUTHENTIC TONE.



outstanding achievement



01: A 5,500 square foot home would not usually be described as "intimate." Yet it was the collection of intimate spaces found in Lookout Lodge, as well as the overall excellence of its interior architecture and design, that moved our judges to recognize the home for "outstanding achievement."

Lookout Lodge is the result of extraordinary teamwork between building professionals and the home's owners. The vacation home, located at Lahontan near Truckee, started as a vision in the owners' minds. "We wanted the house to look as if it had been here for a long time," they say, "and as if it had been used for other purposes...that we just happened to move into the space and make it a home when it really was never intended to be a home from the start." They decided that the overall appearance of the house should be inspired by the architecture of old northern European country homes, yet it should still fit well into the Sierra environment and climate. Finally, although the home would be large and spacious, it had to be both welcoming and cozy.

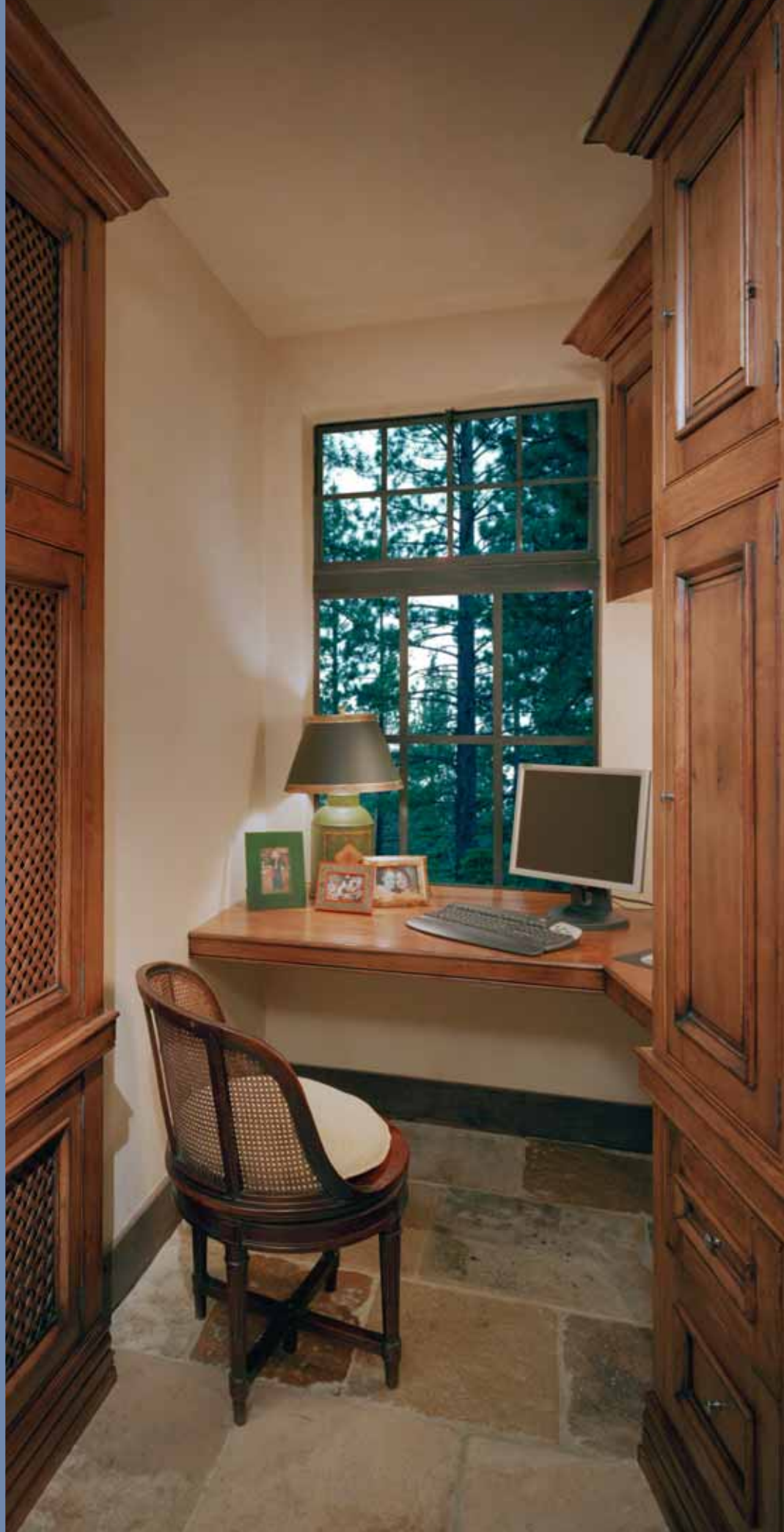
This ambitious set of goals was put to architect Kurt Reinkens, of MWA, Inc., interior architects and designers Cheryl Brantner and Christian Schnyder, of Brantner Design, and contractors John Brink and project superintendent Pete Dittli of John Brink Construction, Inc. The owners actively participated in the planning of the home's interior; much of their inspiration coming from the book *The Private House*, by Rose Tarlow.

After the plans were completed and the team dove into the many details of creating Lookout Lodge, the home evolved in many unforeseen directions. The wonder of the process is that most every detail of this detail-heavy home now appears to be an ideal choice. For example, in the hand-

THE HOUSE IS A MIXTURE OF GRAND ROOMS AND COZY, QUIRKY SPACES. THE LIVING ROOM'S TALL CEILING (LOWER LEFT) IS RIGHT OUT OF A EUROPEAN MANOR, SUPPORTED BY RECLAIMED WOODEN BEAMS SHIPPED OVER FROM FRANCE. THE LIBRARY (TOP LEFT), LOCATED DIRECTLY OFF THE LIVING ROOM, CREATES A MORE INTIMATE ENVIRONMENT. THE ELEGANT BEDROOM (ABOVE) DISPLAYS MANY OF THE DESIGN THEMES OF THE HOME.



SMALLER SPACES OF THE LOOKOUT LODGE ARE ESSENTIAL TO ITS OVERALL ATMOSPHERE. THESE INCLUDE A SMALL POWDER ROOM (ABOVE), A TINY STUDY (RIGHT) LOCATED OFF A HALLWAY, AND THE HOME'S FAMILY ENTRANCE HALL (FAR RIGHT).



outstanding achievement

poured zinc countertops (such countertops being a common feature of French country homes), a beautifully organic flow-line was allowed to remain. A large antique Chinese chest, not originally in the furniture plans, fits perfectly in the living room (Chinese accents are also common to French interiors). A downstairs laundry room off the garage became a now much-loved family entrance. Wood left over from what wasn't used on the floors was cut for windowsills. A found space under the stairs is used for copious wine storage. A space initially intended as a formal dining room became a library.

What started as a search by the home's owners for floor and beam wood in France turned into five freight containers of French building materials, furniture, and other décor. In the pursuit of older (or at least older-looking) materials, Reno-based Northern Nevada Hardwood Floors put the owners in touch with a man in Versailles, France, who located beams from old villas,

dairy farms, factories and railroad cars. Of the timber used for the flooring of Lookout Lodge, some dates from the 1600s. (New wood used in the house was antiqued using a laborious twelve-step process.) Through the same Versailles connection, the owners also obtained antique limestone for the flooring in many rooms.

These well-worn components create much of the home's soulful, soft feel. It is its fluid quirkiness, however, which so impressed our judges. As one of the owners says, its design is "perfectly imperfect." Yet this is an attribute that surely would have felt contrived if overly planned.

Planning was important to the success of Lookout Lodge, of course. Hallways and staircases are extra wide and inviting. The first floor is of uniform level, open and unimposing — and everywhere, one discovers delightful nooks and crannies. Cut out of the hall that leads from the main entryway to the master bedroom is a small

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office without a door. Similarly carved out of the long upstairs hall is a U-shaped window seat that simply begs for a sit. The “cushions” are handmade mattresses for guests, two twin-sized and one a pinch smaller. Also upstairs, just off the attic lounge area, are two *couchettes* — rooms fashioned like the train sleeping compartments — each with a queen-sized bed, vanity and plenty of closet space. In the adjacent attic lounge there is another window seat with another cushion/mattress.

These intimate spaces are essential to the home’s snugly appeal. Yet these spaces also help create the (desired) impression of a home that has been fit into an older, historic structure. After all, who would design guestrooms that are barely larger than a queen-sized bed? (Perhaps someone who has enjoyed a *couchette* on a night train across Europe.)


The overwhelming impression of the home, however, is its thousand-and-one details,

many arrived at very late in the process and accompanied by tales of extraordinary effort. Off the kitchen, for example, a banquet table that seats fourteen is completed by 24 framed botanical images (bought at a Paris flea market), hung in a grid-like pattern above it. Hemp and silk and wool rugs found throughout the home were designed by the home’s owners and handmade by a Nepalese company that they searched out on the Internet. The owners also designed most of the light fixtures and chandeliers and oversaw their fabrication by a company in Alabama (again, a relationship managed exclusively over the Internet).

Design elements that are repeated through the home, such as the custom-designed light fixtures, help unify its overall experience. The walls are all soothingly hand-plastered, their color a warm beige. The spiraling legs of the massive master canopy bed are repeated in both the living room coffee table and a table in the

kitchen. Steel-framed windows throughout add consistency and also contribute to the illusion of the building’s other-than-home history.

One of the interior’s most noteworthy touches is a map located in the family entry. The idea came from a magazine photo of a bathroom interior that featured a huge map with two candles hanging from it. The owners contacted the artist and he agreed to create something similar for them. They then obtained a copy of one of the earliest maps of California from the Library of Congress, which portrays it as an island. The artist reproduced the image and added sweeping iron arms to each side holding large candles. In the lower left-hand corner of the map, “Lahontan” is subtly printed.

Lookout Lodge is a joy of creative ingenuity and careful thought — a tribute to the skills of the professional team who designed and built it, and to the loving attention of its happy owners. 

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