



Architect: Kristi Thompson of MWA, Inc.
Builder: Scott Wallstrom of Sunco Homes
Interior: MWA, Inc., and Betsy Richardson
Landscape: Rare Earth Designs
Year Completed: 2009
Square Feet: 8,227

Bringing the Alps Home

Austrian mountain village inspires Martis Camp getaway

TEXT BY ALISON BENDER / PHOTOS BY VANCE FOX

Several decades ago, newlyweds Ed and Betsy Richardson honeymooned in Kitzbühel, a romantic little ski town in the Austrian Alps near famed mountain Hahnenkamm. The couple fell in love with the village and, when they purchased a two-acre lot in Truckee's Martis Camp development, decided to emulate its Old World grace.

"They wanted it to be quite formal," says MWA architect Kristi Thompson. "They were going for refined and European Alps versus rustic Tahoe."

Thompson worked with the fairly steep lot to create a sprawling Austrian chalet in Tahoe. The exterior is stucco and stone with some wood embellishments ("there is very little use of wood in the European style we were emulating," she says). Inside, Thompson designed high ceilings with radius plaster eaves; mahogany windows are deep-set in thickened walls. Floors are of reclaimed oak and limestone while granite decorates many of the walls. Dark, distressed beams contrast against cream-colored plaster. A curved staircase winds

(far left) Distressed timber beams and trusses, reclaimed oak and limestone floors and heavily textured walls evoke an Old World ambiance. (left) Exterior details include battered stone walls and plaster cladding.

through the home's three stories.

Antique furnishings that the couple had collected over the years drove portions of the design: In the master bathroom, Thompson integrated a sizeable bureau, while the living room features a lofty armoire.

"They had such a strong vision," says Thompson. "It challenged me to do something I'd never done before."

One thing in particular the Richardsons, who live fulltime in Orinda, desired was formal spaces, a contrast to the open plan favored in many Tahoe houses. The home includes a separate dining room, living room, family room and library in addition to the kitchen, wine cellar, master suite, guest rooms and third-floor sun room.

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The project also grew as it evolved—Betsy had originally envisioned 3,500 square feet, but as spaces were added (the kids wanted a billiards room while friends from home insisted on a fourth guest room for their use) and expanded, the home more than doubled.

Yet, even at its impressive size, the entire home exudes a romantic elegance, seeming as equally graceful in the Sierra Nevada as in the Austrian Alps. Beyond its beauty, for the Richardsons, this Old World masterpiece means that the honeymoon has just begun. **TQ**

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