



country eclecticism

IN LAURE AND JIM
HULLVERSON'S HOME,
THE DETAILS ARE
MORE THAN MERE
DECORATION

By *Margaret Bauer*

Photography by *Alise O'Brien*







T

he heart of French Country lies in its contradictions. The sense of dignity in the curves of even the most rustic chandelier. The heavy wooden pieces that anchor otherwise light, airy rooms.

The depth of meaning within the choice of each decorative flourish.

Nowhere is this duality more evident than in Laure and Jim Hullverson's captivating Ladue home. Created by architect Scott Krejci and builder Chuck Schagrin just 10 years ago, the brick residence nonetheless feels like an established presence here, anchoring a rise that sweeps dramatically down to the edge of Pulitzer Creek. Inside, Mrs. Hullverson has harnessed her considerable talents as an interior designer to create rooms that appear stately and formal from a distance, yet up close prove to be, in true French Country fashion, eminently livable.

The details here are certainly pleasing to the eye—in an interior designer's home, that's a given. But this runs deeper than mere decoration. Encoded in every artifact and every work of art is an unmistakable sense of the Hullversons' devotion to their family, as well as their three dogs (Tux, Manatoo and Rodeo), the outdoors and travel.

"We have a lot of artwork that reminds us of Michigan," says Mr. Hullverson, pointing out paintings purchased during annual sojourns to the family's lake house. Painted portraits of their college-aged sons, E.J. and Elliot, and their daughter, Leigh, also by a Michigan artist, can be seen in the dining room. Mrs. Hullverson's portrait, painted when she was in college, hangs in the parlor, her blonde hair curling sleekly above her shoulders.

The petite blonde has a boundless, athletic energy—it's hard to imagine her staying still long enough for a portrait to be painted. As it turns out, she and her husband are inveterate world travelers. Mrs. Hullverson points out artifacts from the couple's hike up the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu: an intricately carved Peruvian mirror, a porter's beaded knit hat, colorful dried gourds. Woven African baskets sit on nearby shelves, alongside coral collected while kayaking off Molokai in Hawaii. A cowrie-shell-edged alligator from Africa climbs one gold-brushed wall in the hallway, and a handmade doll from China sits not far away in the living room. "That's from a very dear friend of mine who's 83, and it was given to her by a friend of hers who'd been a missionary in China. It's old," says Mrs. Hullverson.



(AT TOP) JIM HULLVERSON GREET'S RODEO; (ABOVE AND RIGHT) THE CORNER BREAKFAST ROOM ADJOINS THE KITCHEN.





REFERRING TO THE MACKENZIE-CHILDS TUFFET, LAURE HULLVERSON SAYS:

"That was a gift from my husband the first Christmas we lived here. He picked it out all by himself and brought home this huge, beautifully gift-wrapped box. ... I thought it was an appliance."

hand-carved balusters, added by the home's former owner.

The swirling, apple-like MacKenzie-Childs tuffet in the living room (see page 59) provides another distinctive departure from typical French Country style. "That was a gift from my husband the first Christmas we lived here," says Mrs. Hullverson. "He picked it out all by himself and brought home this huge, beautifully gift-wrapped box. He said, 'Guess what's in it,' and I'm guessing, like, a TV or a microwave. I thought it was an appliance." The tuffet finds its match in a checkered MacKenzie-Childs cookie jar in the kitchen.

Below that room's peaked ceiling, the edges of the off-white Glen Alspaugh cabinets are lightly sanded to antique the edge. Concealed ceiling spots highlight the pattern of the granite countertops, around which nestle a Dacor oven, Sub-Zero fridge, warming drawer and convection microwave. The kitchen's amenities are rounded out in an eco-friendly way, with an under-counter compacter drawer and under-sink composter, as well as a larger composter in the garage.

Downstairs, visitors are greeted by the slight scent of wood smoke—of the home's handful of working fireplaces, only the downstairs one is wood-burning. "It is a real, honest-to-goodness fireplace," says Mr. Hullverson. "We build, I'd say, two fires, maybe three fires a week. All the wood came from outside."

A series of brass-knobbed French doors open onto the home's patio from the hallway on the main floor. From the patio a trail of flagstones winds enticingly through the couple's

gardens and down around the side of the house. The home's breakfast room overlooks this path, a profusion of greenery quivering just outside its gently arching panes. The landscaping and gardens were carefully planned by Simon and Monica Barker, the latter of whom was formerly head rosarian at the Missouri Botanical Garden. Dennis Fitzwilliam of Mound City Gardens engineered the accompanying trails and low, stacked-stone garden walls.

With the Barkers' help the Hullversons have successfully grown a number of Missouri Botanical Garden Plants of Merit, including spirea, lamb's ear and crape myrtle, plus perennial petunias, rodgersia, hydrangeas, bottlebrush buckeye and iris. Butterflies and hummingbirds flit among the many dogwoods, oaks, bald cypress, low-growth sumac and tulip poplars. The couple work in the yard just about every weekend, taking great pride in its continual development. (The dogs enjoy the yard, too, albeit a bit more ... culinarily.)

Like a well-made dollhouse, the home continually yields up tiny new details. Animal images are everywhere: Cockatiels hide in the fabric of an armchair; a ceramic chicken hunkers down atop the kitchen cabinets. China parrots, terracotta rabbits and the living room's antelope-patterned rug continue the theme. The chandeliers and sconces, on closer inspection, are adorned with oak leaves and acorns, and even the light blue blanket folded at the foot of the master bed turns out to be embroidered with the Napoleonic bee. Gargoyles peer from the center of the family room's ceiling fan: "Maybe they'll keep the evil spirits out," quips Mrs. Hullverson. The staircase in the front entryway features distinctive,

Turning homeward, visitors to the gardens can't miss Mrs. Hullverson's ceramic totem, a piece purchased from a local junior high school art class. The totem provides a cultural touchstone in this bucolic setting—the exception that, like the many artifacts indoors, proves the rule of French Country. **AH**

