

atHome

A Magazine for Upstate Living

Spring 2017



The Ideas Issue

Tips on home staging, hacks for space saving, and inspiration for the color-craving



Old World

MODERN LIFE

Equal parts Italian inspiration and work-at-home staycation, Gus and Belinda Rubio's Cliffs at Mountain Park abode is utterly adaptable.

/ by Leigh Savage / photography by Wayne Culpepper



In the showroom living area, a creamy white palette showcases the woodwork and reminds the Rubios of a favorite place, Sea Island, Georgia. Tufted chairs are stylish and comfortable.





Belinda and Gus Rubio needed a home, but they also needed office space and a place to showcase all that their company, Gabriel Builders, offers clients. Their new office/condo at the Cliffs at Mountain Park in Travelers Rest serves all of those purposes and more. Inspired by Mountain Park's Italian Country feel, they enlisted Cynthia Masters at Panageries to help them create an elegant home that functions as well for business meetings and parties of 80 as it does for family gatherings and relaxing weekends.

In business since 1984, Gabriel Builders is a custom home builder that does more than half its business in Cliffs communities. After years based in Greer, the Rubios decided it made sense to be more central to Greenville, Henderson, and Asheville.

"We also wanted to downsize," Belinda says. "Our youngest child is 27, so we thought we might build an office with a small apartment. But when we got to Mountain Park, we decided maybe we wanted to live here instead."

The three-story structure includes office space on the first and second floors and a two-bedroom condo on the top level. "We can access it through a secure elevator or stairs, so it is totally separate," Belinda says.

Gus wanted to recreate what visitors would find in Italy, including the landscaping, "so we created a pool that you might see in Italy—very simple, with grass growing around it. And of course the grandchildren love it." The Rubios have three adult children and two granddaughters, ages 5 and 8.

Other Italian touches on the exterior include exposed rafter tails on the roof, barrel tiles, and intricate trim work. Inside, plaster walls are accented with timbers from a 200-year-old barn in Pennsylvania. "So many of our customers want the real deal—reclaimed wood from an old barn," Gus Rubio says. "That's a little more expensive, so we wanted to show the reclaimed wood (on the upper level) as well as new wood that we made look old (downstairs)."

Divine details

Masters also considered variety when planning furnishings, finishes, and

The first-floor showroom kitchen houses a limestone range hood and pewter countertops by Francois & Co., as well as a maple Italian trestle table by Foothills Amish Furniture in Landrum. The beams are new wood but were distressed to look old.

accents. “We wanted a cohesive space that also shows all of the different details and possibilities with beams, countertops, molding,” Masters says. “It was a tall order, but we wanted people to be able to come in and say, I can envision that in my house.”

The Rubios sprinkled unique touches throughout. They wanted to show how clients can use space under stairs and came up with an indoor dog nook designed just for Moose, a Whoodle (Wheaten terrier-poodle); and Tibi, a Shi Tzu. “My wife loves her dogs more than she loves me,” Gus Rubio jokes.

The Rubios met when Gus was 14 and Belinda was 11 and started dating three years later. Their easy, laughter-filled rapport shows that even spending every day working together hasn’t diminished their affection. As vice president, Belinda focuses on customer relationships while Gus, the president, and his team create the hand-crafted homes. “We had a customer live with us for two weeks,” Belinda said. “We really want to maintain those relationships.”

Up and down

Masters had two different directives for the first floor and the third floor. The lower level features more high-end finishes, neutral tones, and traditional furnishings, along with both warm and cool accents. Upstairs, she went warmer and also added a bit more color for the Rubios. But for both, “we wanted to let the architecture speak,” Masters says. “We created a jewel box where both levels are filled with inspiration.”

The first-floor showroom is a show stopper: The entryway downstairs greets visitors with French oak parquet. From here, you can also see standard knotted oak floor and another that is five-inch with fewer knots. “So as soon as you walk in, you can see three different types of floors,” Belinda Rubio says, a hint at the variety that will soon be on display.

Belinda had seen an antique stone sink that she loved, so Masters had a fabricator use a laser carving machine to





The condo's kitchen has a more informal feel than its downstairs counterpart.

The elaborate ceiling in the upstairs master suite was designed by architect Stephen Fuller. Interior designer Cynthia Masters added a wrought-iron bed and leather headboard.





create a similar piece at a much lower cost. The limestone sink was then wall-mounted in the powder room using ironwork by Heirloom, the company that also worked on the staircases. "Limestone is easy to carve, is antibacterial, and gives that Old World feel," Masters said.

Limestone flooring in a Versailles pattern was used in the showroom kitchen and living room. Belinda Rubio loves to cook, and while the upstairs kitchen is pretty and useful, the first-floor kitchen is where the larger family events take place. It's not just a showroom. It's a fully operational kitchen, with Wolf and Sub-Zero appliances and an Italian trestle table, built of maple by Foothills Amish Furniture in Landrum, that seats 12. Arched pocket doors open completely to the outdoor porch.

The limestone range hood is by Francois & Co., as are the pewter countertops that Masters said will only become more beautiful with age.

Upstairs is the third-floor condo, also the Rubios' private suite (which is not all that private, as they often show it to potential customers). The couple used a pre-engineered hardwood floor from Gary Jordan at Jordan Wholesale Lumber. They selected it before finding out it is called the Rubio floor.

In the living room, she and Masters selected or commissioned art with personal meaning, including a painting of a family walking toward an oak tree. "It's like our kids walking hand-in-hand," Rubio says. Oushak rugs, arched doorways, slightly abstract landscapes and swivel chairs bring comfort and beauty to the living area.

In the powder room, Masters designed a pale blue cabinet and used a quartzite countertop and metal sink. A Venetian mirror was aged to look old, while the towel holder is an antique door knocker from France.

The master bath is full of a marble called Diana Royal, used honed on the floor, as tumbled brick on a wall and as a slab for countertops.

In the upstairs kitchen, quartzite was used for the countertops - made double-thick along the edges to look like a thicker piece. "Quartzite has beautiful veining like marble but is harder than granite," Masters says.

The Rubios love how their home functions as an office, a showplace, but most of all, as a beautiful and convenient place to live. "It's off the beaten path, but we can be in downtown Greenville in 25 minutes, or Flat Rock in 15," Belinda Rubio says. "We have nine miles of walking trails but we are close to everything. We love it up here. It's a hidden jewel." [OH](#)





[Opposite] Laser-carved limestone mimics an antique stone sink in the showroom powder room. Campobello based The Heirloom Companies, which created ironwork throughout the home, made the brackets. [This page] The master bath is outfitted with Diana Royal marble used three ways.



A beautifully appointed theater room on the second level serves not only as a client presentation space, but as Gus's perfect spot to catch up on his film loving pastime.



The pool, surrounded by grass, mimics Italian pools and is a favorite of the Rubios' grandchildren.





Arched openings and doors are used throughout the home, here on the back porch. Popular features, often requested by clients, are the screens that drop down from the arches.