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Framed calligraphy in the entry depicts the home's name, Chin Li.



Mountain-Asian Fusion

Yin meets yang at the Marsh home in Cliffs Valley

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Kevin and Sue Marsh have different tastes, interests and personalities, and it's these differences that have made them ideal partners – both in decades of marriage and in collaborating on a unique mountain home where two divergent styles come together to create something uniquely their own.

The Marshes have lived in Columbia since the late 1970s, and still reside there for most of the year. But five years ago, they purchased a lot in the Cliffs Valley and built a home to enjoy on weekends and holidays -- and to live in permanently once Kevin retires.

They worked with architectural firm Design Elite and builder Rodney Edwards of Edwards Builders Inc to create the perfect plan to suit their sloping lot and to maximize amazing views in two directions.

(ABOVE) The screened porch is a favorite place to soak up the home's colorful mountain vistas. The Marshes love to watch the scenery year-round, from fall foliage and winter flurries to spring blooms and summer storms. Next to the arched front door are tall wooden sculptural parts taken from an Indonesian sugar processing plant.

(RIGHT) The main living area builds mountain ambiance with a stacked stone fireplace and exposed beams, while a neutral color scheme does not compete with the panoramic view.





When it came to décor, they were thrilled to find Cynthia Masters at Panageries, because lack of design experience is one thing both Marshes share.

“We have no design vision or decorating vision,” Sue said, laughing. “Without Cynthia, everything would have been off-white.”

Instead, Masters helped the Marshes create an oasis that combines Sue’s love of all things Asian with Kevin’s taste for classic, rugged mountain-home décor. Masters also deftly combined his more budget-conscious approach with her focus on aesthetics.

By blending Asian accents with dark woods and stacked stone -- and focusing spending on key areas such as the kitchen -- Masters found a balance where both Marshes feel perfectly at home.

“We had to trust Cynthia,” Kevin said. “If we couldn’t agree, she would just say, ‘Trust me,’ and she was right.”

For Masters, this Cliffs Valley home was a dream project.

“They were open to doing things that might not be what you’d expect in a mountain home,” she said. “It’s mountain-Asian fusion,” a style Masters has never worked on before or since.

(ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT) At the dining table, eyes not on the mountain scenery are often drawn up to the octagonal wood paneling above. The home is dotted with accents that indulge Sue Marsh’s love for Asian style. A custom-designed range hood and a large painted island brighten the wood-filled kitchen.



In the entryway, guests encounter large wooden sculptural parts left over from Indonesian sugar processing plants. Nearby is framed Chinese calligraphy depicting the home's name, Chin Li.

"We didn't know what that meant when we named it that, but later found out that it means gold or money and mountain range," Sue said. "Which is perfect because we threw one at the other to make this house!"

The massive beams in the living room were designed to crack, lending an aged appearance, and a huge stacked stone hearth dominates one wall. But the main event in this room is the scenery, with two walls of windows meeting in a point, allowing a short view and a longer view through several mountains.

"The sun sets right there, and the clouds just light up," Kevin said. "The weather is our entertainment," Sue added.

The couple wanted the kitchen, living and dining areas to be open, so all three incorporate stained oak floors and neutral colors. The kitchen, where Sue enjoys cooking and baking, includes low-maintenance quartz countertops, a Wolf range, double ovens and a concrete sink.



The seat at the vanity in the luxurious master bath is an example of the style the Marshes and designer Cynthia Masters were after: "so Asian, but with a rustic mountain look," Sue said. The screen in the master bedroom is another style compromise, giving Sue some Asian flair but with a modern look. The clean palette in the master suite creates a backdrop for the wall of windows that almost reaches the ceiling.





Above the dining table, the architects included an octagonal ceiling feature to add interest, and Masters used various tones of wood to marry different elements of the house together.

“The ceiling is the fifth wall, so you can use that as a design element to bring in depth or richness or color,” she said.

Through the living room is Sue’s office area, where her whimsical side is on display. Trinkets brought back from Japan and China mingle with Lucille Ball and Donald Duck memorabilia and an original Dr. Seuss drawing. Photos of the couple’s grown daughters, Becky and Amy, and their two grandchildren are on display.

The powder room on the main level was one place where Sue’s Asian style is in full evidence, with a painted cabinet, cloisonné vessel sink, and a mirror with bamboo-style tiles.

The master suite was created with serenity in mind, with a quiet color palette and a full wall of windows that take advantage of the soaring ceiling. Paintings featuring koi and an elegant gold-leaf screen bring a touch of Asian flair.

“I love screens, including the ones painted with cherry trees,” Sue said. “He hates the painted ones, but he liked this, so I still get my screen.”

(BELOW LEFT TO RIGHT) The recreation room, or “man cave,” offers comfortable seating for movie nights plus a small bar area. Serene plantings tie the indoors with the outdoors. The wooden statues in the corner, dubbed Elmer and Bertha, add personality at the bottom of the stairs leading to the recreation room.



In the master bath, the couple splurged on Walker Zanger tiles in a fish-scale pattern, plus natural stone floor tiles with radiant heat.

The lower level is home to the “man cave,” along with three bedrooms and tons of storage. In the “man cave,” or den, a 72-inch television and Wii system create an ideal spot for movie night, football games or fun with the grandkids. Masters wanted something unusual and fun near the stairs in this room, and two statues in the corner -- dubbed Elmer and Bertha -- fit the bill. They were in a store and not for sale, but “they were perfect, so I insisted,” Masters said with a laugh.

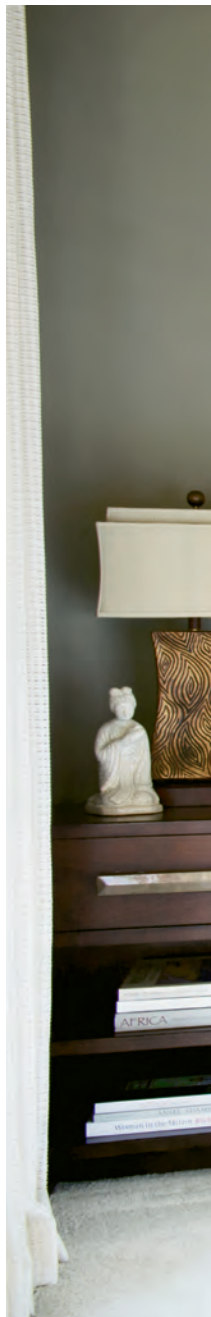
“Becky’s room” features a deep charcoal ceiling, a unique old-fashioned ceiling fan and a private bath with intricate tile medallions. “Amy’s room” has a smaller bathroom that is across the hall, but also boasts a prime mountain view. A leaf motif brings the natural setting indoors.

The final room is the “grandkid room,” with twin beds and its own private deck made of ipe wood. Colorful art and a horse sculpture are fun without being too childish, Sue said.

Despite – or because of – its different elements, Chin Li became exactly what the Marshes were hoping for: a marriage of two styles that are even better when blended together. ah



The Marsh's daughters each have a beautifully decorated room to enjoy during visits to the mountain. The grandchildren benefit from a private deck with spectacular views.



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