



THE *Art* OF THE HOME

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A house—old or new—is not a home until its owner makes it one, and the transformation of house to home is nothing short of artistry. As in the creation of any work of art, the process is deeply personal and requires confidence, countless decisions, and the occasional thunderbolt of inspiration.

The art of making a home has no end, since homes change hands and necessarily evolve to meet the needs and preferences of their owners, all of whom share the common goal of creating an inviting space to enjoy in solitude, or share with family and friends.

This year *Bloom* was invited into four artful homes: two bold new structures built in established neighborhoods, designed outside and in to reflect the owners' tastes and lifestyles; and two historic homes, lovingly restored and adapted to celebrate the owners' aesthetic sensibilities. All four embrace bold color, diverse textures, old and new treasures, and antiques transported from other continents.



1. New cabinets, built to match the originals, were added to maximize the kitchen's functionality.

2. Sandi's sunny second-floor study. The framed lithograph on the right wall, titled *Mother & Child*, is by artist Marilyn Zapp. The cactus on the wooden pedestal is more than 40 years old and was a gift from Sandi's grandmother.

3. French doors lead from the dining room onto the sun porch, which Jeannine and Sandi added to the house the first year they bought it. The dining set belonged to Sandi's grandparents; the framed German tapestry at left was a gift from Jeannine's sister.

4. Artwork and antiques decorate the walls from the downstairs living space to the upstairs.

5. Sandi Cole and Jeannine Butler's 1930 Tudor Revival-style duplex sits on one of Bloomington's only remaining brick streets, just north of the Indiana Memorial Union. The home's upper and lower levels have identical layouts and retain many of the home's original features.



A HISTORIC HOME IN THE HEART OF BLOOMINGTON

On a wintry day in 1991, Sandi Cole and Jeannine Butler stepped into the living room of a 1930 Tudor Revival-style duplex that wasn't yet on the market and were spellbound by the light streaming through the living room's leaded windows and the burnished glow of the oak floors and crown molding. They immediately made an offer, which was accepted, and have been enthralled with the house and its distinctive location for almost 30 years.

Situated in the University Courts Historic District, which was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2007, the home is on one of Bloomington's only remaining brick streets, just blocks from the Indiana Memorial Union. Many of its neighboring structures are university-owned student rentals.

"The joys of living here are being surrounded by students and being able to walk to downtown and to campus," says Sandi, who directs the Indiana University Center on Education and Lifelong Learning. "While there are challenges of living near students, the pleasures outweigh these."

Jeannine and Sandi recall the initial flurry of home improvement projects they made the first year they lived in their home. Most of these were cosmetic because the house had "good bones" and had only been a rental for a short time.

"My nephews helped with some of the bigger projects, such as extending the garage by four feet to accommodate larger vehicles," says Jeannine, a former Monroe County Community School Corporation board member who served for years on the Bloomington Historic Preservation Commission. "We also had the front sunroom added, and local cabinetmaker Nancy Hiller made our kitchen more user-friendly by making some new cabinets to match the original cabinets."



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6. A tranquil upstairs bedroom with cornflower blue walls, gauzy curtains, and Bella Bella mirror.

7. The downstairs bathroom has its original tile, sink, and tub and is decorated with framed, handmade valentines given to Jeannine and Sandi by Gretchen Sigmund Marks, a close friend and Columbus, Indiana, artist.

8. The upstairs living room is painted a warm, buttery yellow and is more casually furnished than its twin on the first floor.

9. A mix of family antiques and modern pieces adorn the hallway.

10. Jeannine Butler (left) and Sandi Cole (holding Zeke, their miniature dachshund) sit in their living room, which is filled with contemporary and traditional works of art.



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The home's aura is one of solidity and comfort, enhanced by the owners' tasteful furnishings—a mix of family antiques and modern pieces—and colorful art and paint choices. The downstairs fireplace has been painted a rich eggplant, a hue that is picked up by a plush Bella Bella area rug. A nearby bathroom, graced with original fixtures and tile, features framed, heart-shaped valentines, annual gifts made by Gretchen Sigmund Marks, a Columbus, Indiana, artist and close friend. Sandi's collection of African masks adds flair to the foyer.

Because the structure is an over-under duplex, both floors have identical layouts. Each floor has a large wood-burning fireplace in the living room, a kitchen, two bedrooms, and a bathroom. Jeannine and Sandi slightly modified the upstairs kitchen to provide extra storage, but it could easily be converted back to a functioning kitchen. "We wanted to keep our options open so we could rent the upstairs at some point if we wanted to," Sandi explains.

Living in a structurally sound older home that only requires routine maintenance allows Jeannine and Sandi time to pursue their shared passion: gardening. Their garden was recently featured on the annual Bloomington Garden Club Summer Garden Walk, and they often have passersby stop and admire their urban oasis. They frequently offer them an impromptu garden tour.

With the loving stewardship of their home soon entering a fourth decade, Jeannine shares their wish for its future: "Our hope is that whoever lives here will continue to take care of the home and gardens."



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A CHIC 'COUNTRY' HOUSE

With his trim beard and hip eyewear, architect Kris Floyd might be mistaken for a Los Angeles or New York City transplant rather than a native of tiny LaFontaine, Indiana, in the north-central part of the state. "I'm a country boy," he confesses, standing in the foyer of the new home he designed on the edge of Elm Heights. A sweeping glance around the first floor reveals sophisticated taste, wit, and thoughtfully curated artwork and mementos. But on closer inspection, Kris' affinity for nature—his inner country boy—becomes apparent.

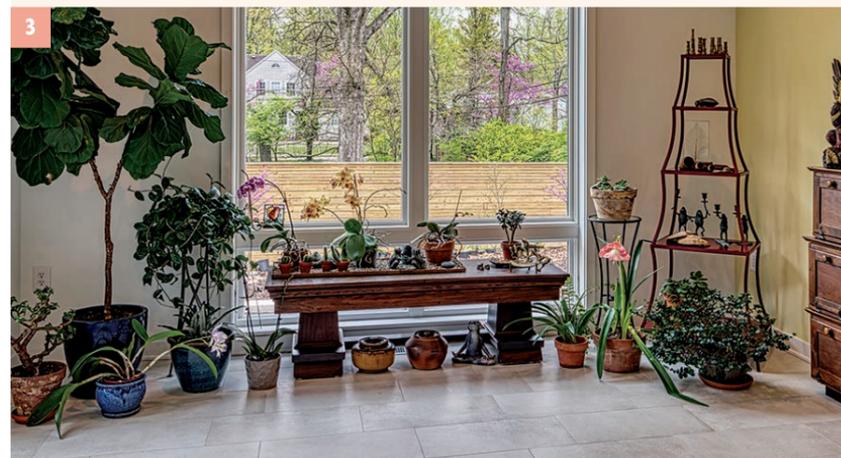
Kris' new home sits on the site of a rental house he had owned since 2003. "That house was a poorly built crackerbox, so the entire structure was demolished to make way for the new house," he says. "It was nice to be able to replace a student rental with an owner-occupied home."

Kris, who moved to Bloomington 26 years ago and joined Matheu Architects PC in 1999, reflected on the aesthetic and practical issues he considered while designing his home.

"I'm an earth-loving guy, so I wanted warmth and comfort in the materials and colors, but at the same time light and simple," he explains. "Because Elm Heights has a wide range of architectural styles, this house needed to be transitional, yet speak to the time that it was built and not attempt to mimic a particular style to try to blend in. I believe that approach isn't authentic and is rarely successful."



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1. Architect Kris Floyd worked with the challenges of a small, steep lot when he designed his new home—a sleek contemporary with earthy elements.

2. A wall separates the foyer from the kitchen but allows the floor plan to remain open. The wall hanging is a Peruvian tapestry Kris bought at (the now defunct) Athena years ago. At left, a few stairs lead down to shelves lined with Indiana-produced Red Gold canned tomatoes, a staple of Kris' culinary creations.

3. Kris also brings the outdoors in by arranging plants on the back porch.

4. Kris Floyd's new home has an open, functional floor plan designed for entertaining.

5. "I love the fireplace with the sort of Mondrianish arrangement to accommodate the hearth, art work, TV, ceramics, and cherry tree branches," says Kris. "I like the combination of materials and colors. It is visually interesting but not complicated or cluttered."

6. The airy guest room is furnished with an antique brass bed and features a large window that frames a view that brings the outside in.

7. Kris' kitchen has a neutral palette with practical, durable surfaces and a cozy booth where he likes to work while he has his morning coffee.

8. An avid cook, Kris keeps dramatically lit shallow shelves near the kitchen stocked with Red Gold canned tomatoes. He jokingly refers to this compelling pop art display as an "Andy Warhol rip-off."

9. The planned limestone and brick proved to be cost prohibitive, so to stay within his budget Kris opted to use painted Boral, a manmade product, for the back siding.

10. The window in the streamlined master bathroom frames the graceful boughs of a neighbor's spruce tree.

11. Kris Floyd, a Bloomington resident for 26 years and an associate of Matheu Architects, is a self-professed "country boy" from tiny LaFontaine, Indiana. He designed his new home to incorporate earthy elements with modern design.



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With Mark Longacre as his general contractor, the new house took shape relatively quickly, despite the challenges presented by a narrow, steep lot. "Mark and his co-workers Aaron McDaniel and John Dehner were great to work with," Kris says. "We broke ground in March 2017, and I moved in December of that same year."

The home has two floors with a full basement and slightly less than 2,500 square feet of living space, but presents more verticality because of the placement of the garage.

"The northeast corner appears to be three stories because the narrow site required that the garage be tucked underneath, which is actually very common in older Elm Heights houses," he says. "The house's sense of height is exaggerated because it sits at the crest of the hill and is next to one-story midcentury ranches that sit downhill."

The home's large windows offer beautiful views, a feature carefully calculated by Kris. "I was thinking about the light and open feeling that the large windows would provide," he says. "Once the framing was up, I realized that the windows perfectly framed my neighbor's beautiful oaks to the south and the gorgeous spruce to the east. Because all of the surrounding houses sit downhill, it's much like being in a tree house. I love that you can see over rooftops to the lights of campus, giving a unique urban feel that is different than what you normally experience at street level in the neighborhood."

But the most poignant view Kris has from one of his windows is that of the 1928 Tudor Revival next door, which he shared with his late partner, Bob Brookshire, for 17 years.

"Many people wonder if I miss or regret selling the place, but no," he says. "The new owners love the house as much as I did and they are thoroughly enjoying it. Besides, I get to look out the windows at the beautiful limestone addition that I designed."



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A MODERN FARMHOUSE

When Sara Topoligus and Bryan Absher met in 2012, they discovered they both had a passion for home renovation. A mutual friend recommended Bryan as someone who could remodel a bathroom in Sara's 1930's American Foursquare home on Sare Road. "Perhaps this was a matchmaker set up," Sara grins.

The bathroom project led to romance. The two married in 2014, then started their company, Steelcore Construction Co. Soon, they had three major home renovations to their credit, including the radically renovated home they moved into in 2018, a maintenance-free modern farmhouse on Woodstock Place off of High Street.

"We purchased the property in September 2016 at a real estate auction," says Sara, a Bloomington native whose family has deep roots here. "First, we cleared all of the overgrown landscaping just to see what the house looked like. The original house was a 1965 quad-level that had significant water damage. While the outdoor plans and teardown were implemented, architect/draftsman Frank Spence created the farmhouse design."

Bryan, who is originally from southern Illinois and moved to Indiana in the 1990s to work on the historic preservation projects at French Lick and West Baden resorts, adds, "This style of house is very popular right now. We knew we wanted to use a metal roof and black-clad windows as we had on our previous project in Elm Heights and keep the quad level layout of the original house, with the half staircases for easy living and a large great room that includes the kitchen."

Most of the construction took place in 2017, with some finishing touches added in 2018. Completed, the 4,700-square-foot home has four levels and includes four bedrooms, two and a half baths, a great room, a den, mudroom, basement, garage, and a huge wraparound porch.

1. In 2017, Sara Topologus Absher and Bryan Absher began renovating a severely water-damaged quad-level house and planned to sell it as a spec house. After the project was finished, the couple decided the four-level modern farmhouse they built was perfect for them and moved in last summer.

2. Sara Topoligus Absher and Bryan Absher relaxing in their great room. The couple's cream, long-haired miniature dachshund sisters—Greta and Gigi—snuggle on Sara's lap.

3. The great room's décor is a blend of traditional and contemporary furnishings and art, including an antique sofa reupholstered with blue and white floral Ralph Lauren fabric and an antique English armoire (far right), next to which is mounted a metal sculpture of a human torso made by Bryan.

4. This view from the living room looking into the kitchen reveals the room's 24-foot vaulted ceiling. At right, pillars define the open foyer. The living room grouping in the foreground is from Lisa Smith Interiors.

5. The garage-level den boasts a custom fireplace of buff limestone in front of which is a seating arrangement of curved gray velvet loveseats facing a round marble coffee table from Lisa Smith Interiors. The piano on the back wall is an antique upright grand Sara bought from Smith-Holden Music when the store was closing.



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6. Because the ceilings in the master bedroom are almost 20 feet high, Sara chose a dramatic, tufted Chesterfield sleigh bed with a high headboard and footboard. The c. 1840 American Empire chest is made from mahogany, cherry, and tiger maple woods and was a gift from Sara's mother; over it hangs a painting of a large peony by Bloomington artist Carolyn Peepall.

7. Sara's home office is furnished with antiques, including a variety of barrister bookcases she got from various family members. She selected gray and copper foil wallpaper in a botanical print to accent one wall in the room. The framed collage is by the late artist Marvin Lowe and was found by Sara's mother at a Bloomington estate sale.

8. The cedar ceiling of the large wraparound porch is visible in this view off of the living room.

9. Sara's future plans for the master bath, which features a quartz vanity, vertical subway tile, and Kohler fixtures, is to wallpaper with faux Shagreen wallpaper.

10. This photo of Bryan's digital recording studio shows only eight of approximately 30 guitars in his collection. When he isn't busy with his day job as a contractor and iron worker, Bryan plays with local rock band Harum Scarum.

11. Sara discovered the gray paint she selected for the kitchen had a slate blue cast, so she opted for café chairs in navy and white rattan from Serena & Lily. The kitchen features Thermador appliances and oak flooring throughout.

"From the beginning we planned to sell the house as a spec home, but once it was on the market we decided we appreciated its features more than we realized," admits Sara. "We loved our Sare Road house, which we cared for and renovated for eight years, but we were both excited to live and grow in the new house."

With 25 years in the construction industry under his tool belt, Bryan pragmatically adds, "When working on an old home, one confronts many unforeseen issues, which often require investigation and devising a solution to correct or repair tired or worn-out components. The new house is completely finished, except for decorating. No further work or maintenance needs to be done for many years to come."

As Sara and Bryan enjoy their first full summer in the new house, they also anticipate future projects that will return older homes to their former glory or make them more livable than they ever have been, especially in core Bloomington neighborhoods where sensitive architectural design is valued, if not mandated, by historic neighborhood guidelines.

"The Woodstock home was chosen due to its great location—close to campus, east-side businesses, and an established neighborhood," Sara says. "Why not create a fabulous home at a fabulous location?"



HOME OF A WORLD TRAVELER

After John Linnemeier had rented a 1927 brick bungalow he owned near Indiana University to students for 20 years, he decided to reclaim it for his own home. Since John is not a do-it-yourselfer, 10 years ago he gathered together a core group of skilled craftsmen and they began bouncing ideas around.

“Everything was done through collaboration,” says the Bloomington native, Vietnam veteran, world traveler, and former mayoral candidate. “Collaboration cultivates fun and creativity. Eight minds went into creating the fireplace.”

Sure, some practical matters needed to be addressed along the way. For example, a living room wall was removed to give the home back its three original bedrooms instead of the five it had when it was a student rental. John credits his three core collaborators—designer Vincent Edwards, carpenter John Williams, and the late Hugh Hazelrigg, a plasterer—for efficiently dispatching the more mundane aspects of the renovation and embracing the out-of-the-box projects that would ultimately realize his dream environment. The entire transformation, inside and out, took the better part of a year.



1. A model of the starship USS Enterprise appears to have collided with the plaster wall above the fireplace. The wall unit was constructed by Clarity Design to accommodate John's extensive collection of treasures from his travels to 138 countries.

2. Higgy Boson, the Linnemeiers' goldendoodle, sits in front of a table John bought from a Viet Cong veteran in Ho Chi Minh City. The quilt on the left couch is a made from embroidered pieces from dozens of Guatemalan villages; the pillows are from India.

3. John Linnemeier rented out this 1927 bungalow for many years before deciding to make it his own home. Extensive interior renovation and exterior landscaping transformed the student rental into an understated sanctuary designed to showcase John's vast collection of art and antiques amassed over decades of travel.

4. John holding a walking stick he bought in Kenya



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5. The kitchen features six light sources including an illuminated Michelin Man. The breakfast nook was designed by Vince Edward. The industrial-style faucet over the sink was meant for a restaurant.

6. The Linnemeiers' back yard is a private urban oasis that includes a large, man-made pond with koi and water lilies.

7. The stairway illustrates what John means when he says he is "into eclecticism with a vengeance." Visible are a painting and wood carving from Bali, a ship model and brass birdcage from India, disco balls, a model of a WWII Spitfire, a work by artist Zane A. Miller, and a working pendulum clock from Germany.

8. The head of the bed in the master bedroom is nestled in a plaster alcove in which reading lights have been installed, combining John's affinity for light and cozy spaces. The bedspread is a quilt made from Guatemalan *huipiles*, embroidered blouses worn by indigenous Guatemalan women.



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One of John's priorities was creating spaces to showcase the multitude of treasures he has collected over years of travel to 138 countries and other whimsical curiosities that make him smile when he looks at them. The living room's black lacquered custom wall shelving, built by Clarity Design Inc., has myriad cubbies measured to hold specific objects d'art, books, and a large antique model ship—one of eight in John's collection. Above the living room's massive plaster fireplace, a replica of the starship USS Enterprise juts out of the wall, surrounded by trompe l'oeil detail evoking a fiery collision. A Klingon epithet, provided by a Klingon linguist with whom John consulted, looms above the simulated (and witty) catastrophe. Asked the meaning of the script, John replies, "I think it's something to the effect of 'Somebody is going to get in trouble for this!'"

"Lighting is also a huge thing," explains John, gesturing to a dramatically lit African mask. "I had many spotlights installed to accent art. The living room and kitchen have multiple forms of lighting to create different moods."

John's wife, Gail, appreciates his imaginative and expansive aesthetic, though her private upstairs study is simple and minimally decorated. "Gail's a good sport and lets me do my thing. I'm into eclecticism with a vengeance," chuckles John. "I like to bring something back from every place I visit, even if it's just a rock for the garden."

At the mention of the garden, John heads out the back door into an oasis that includes a large man-made pond with koi and water lilies, landscaped with stone excavated from the property, a wisteria-covered pergola, and a 27-piece marble fountain made by Indian artisans, a replica of the fountain at the Maharaja's palace in Jaipur, India.

"There are many things I can't do," John says. "But I do have a capacity to say 'yes' and have always embraced curiosity and the joy of exploration. Those instincts have helped create my favorite place on Earth." ✨



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