

OLD WORLD meets MODERN LIFE

Fusing timeless Tuscan style with contemporary comforts, this family home is at once impressive and inviting.

Crafting a home where entertaining feels effortless is a familiar brief from the clients of Deep River Partners, a design-forward architecture and interiors firm based in Wisconsin. Less typical, however, were the parameters they received for a residential build in a quiet enclave on the outskirts of Milwaukee. “They wanted to bring a little bit of Italy back [to this area],” explains Nicholas Blavat, AIA, owner and design principal of Deep River Partners.

That “little bit of Italy” turned into a transportive 11,000 square feet of Tuscan-inspired grandeur. From the moment the homeowners and their guests step through the trellised courtyard and ascend the stone steps to the arched mahogany double doors, they’re whisked away to another place and time.

STORY BY
SUZANNA LOGAN

PHOTOGRAPHY
COURTESY OF
DEEP RIVER PARTNERS

Not only does the house have a sense of structural permanence thanks to layers of timber and stone, Nicholas Blavat, owner and design principal of Deep River Partners, believes its Tuscan leanings are a tribute to timeless design: “A historic Tuscan style like this is bullet-proof. The beauty of rooted style is that it’s time-tested for the ages.”



RIGHT The family room exudes warmth with plush furnishings, curtains and a patterned rug set against the floor-to-ceiling stone fireplace. Above, vaulted ceilings are accented by timber work with metal brackets and decorative tie rods.

details

SQUARE FOOTAGE

11,000

DESIGNER

DEEP RIVER PARTNERS

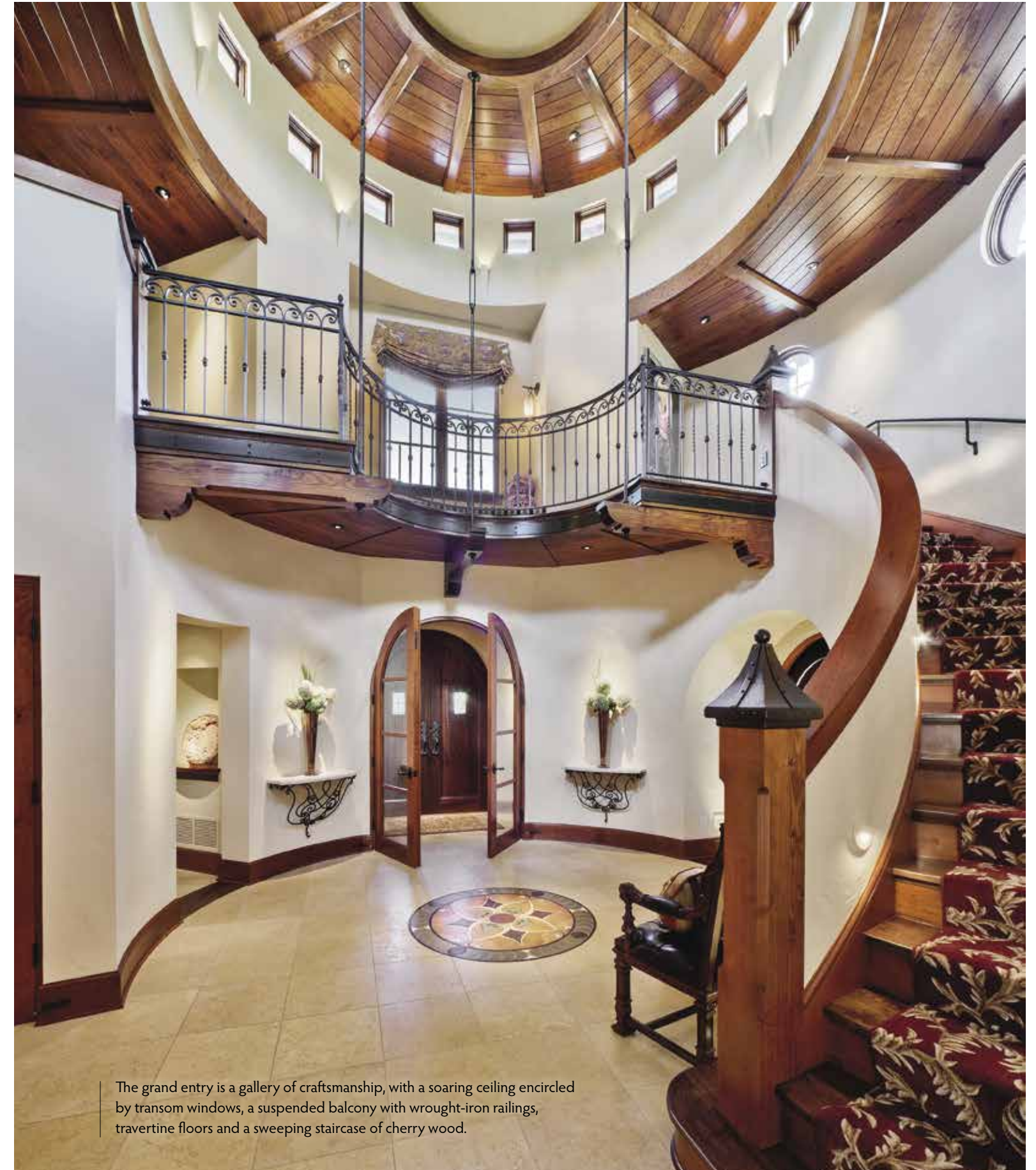
deep-river.com



GUIDED BY THE TAPESTRY OF TUSCANY

With an artful vision of palpable old-world strength, the design team channeled European style through carefully crafted architectural and design elements. “If you go to the Italian countryside, those houses have been there for centuries. In that same way, this house is resilient because of its heavy timbers and stonework...but the style is also intrinsically warm and inviting,” says Nicholas. In addition to the cedar timber elements and heavily mortared sandstone, the exterior design scheme includes sweeping arches, turret-inspired forms, thoughtfully placed wrought iron details and sun-drenched outdoor spaces enhanced by garden features and fountains.

The polished interiors continue the villa-inspired theming. Materials and finishes celebrating the traditions of Tuscan design carry across three levels. From the main living areas to the private spaces, including the four bedrooms with en suite bathrooms, natural stone countertops and flooring, cherry wood, Douglas fir details and wrought iron accents abound. If the walls could speak, they might tell of their hand-applied plaster with skip-trowel finish, stonework facade or pastoral murals capturing the serenity of Italy’s countryside. Against this canvas of rustic refinement, bespoke touches fill every room: collections of oil paintings and luxe furnishings upholstered in a tapestry of earth tones.



The grand entry is a gallery of craftsmanship, with a soaring ceiling encircled by transom windows, a suspended balcony with wrought-iron railings, travertine floors and a sweeping staircase of cherry wood.



ABOVE The home's gourmet kitchen may feel rooted in old-world Italy, with its exposed timbers, stone walls and tile floors, but a wealth of amenities — a full butler's pantry, Wolf and Subzero appliances and a cozy sitting area flanking a fireplace — ensure the space is well suited to modern living and entertaining.



ABOVE A baby grand piano set against a Douglas-fir-trimmed alcove takes center stage under the wood-coffered ceiling in the living room. Modern touches lighten the space, figuratively and literally. A sculptural, silver table lamp adds a contemporary edge, while app-based Lutron lighting is used throughout the house. "It was a smart house before it ever became an industry trend," shares Nicholas.

BUILT FOR GATHERINGS

Beyond the layers of striking design, the heart of the home remains warm and people-centered. Generous entertaining spaces throughout the main floor are designed for gracious hosting and easy mingling. In the kitchen, light streams through the arched French doors that line the room, casting a warm glow onto the exposed wood beams, stone walls and herringbone-style floors. A central island invites everyone to share in the culinary experience and conversation. "The homeowners have a passion for food, drink and gathering," says Nicholas. The adjacent living room has an air of relaxed formality, with a grand piano resting under coffered ceilings, framed by fringed drapes, while the family room offers a more casual respite. Throughout both the interior and outdoor spaces, a scattering of intimate seating moments — a pair of armchairs near a fireplace here, a stone bench near a fountain there — imbue the home with a subtle sense of romance.



But the design isn't entirely of the Old World. Contemporary amenities, such as a golf simulator, a theater space and a game room, reflect the homeowner's fun-loving spirit. "They set this whole place up for their social lifestyle," says Nicholas. "They live big, and their home is their oasis."

Furthermore, the selection of durable finishes hints at the home's practical sensibilities. "When you're hosting 40 people at a time, you must ensure everything is resilient. The materiality is set so that it isn't easily damaged, and even if it was, it would just add to the character," says Nicholas.

ABOVE The lower level offers an array of luxuries, including a wine cellar and bar, a golf simulator, an exercise room and a recreation space with a projector screen and game tables.

OPPOSITE The passage through a stone-encased archway to reach the home's pub-style bar in the lower level creates an authentic ambiance. Rustic cherry wood shines in the space, complemented by custom iron scrollwork and granite countertops with an elegant ogee edge.





ABOVE With its stone fireplace and easy access to the sunken hot tub and rear terrace, the porch pavilion is made for gathering. The structure features Douglas fir timbers, with steel details elevating the design. “Metal dances around the whole inside and outside,” says Nicholas. “Those details—the brackets and finials—all bring it to life.”

The easy-flowing layout also embraces the best elements of modern design, with open spaces centered on indoor-outdoor connection. From the main living areas, multiple connection points lead to the home’s entertaining pièce de résistance: the terraced courtyard. To the left, a timbered, screened-in porch pavilion with a stone fireplace opens to a stone-ensconced spa. To the right, an outdoor grilling and bar area keeps the food and drinks flowing. At the heart of it all, the Mediterranean-blue pool is the jewel of the space, inviting guests to linger in a home where every moment feels touched by the Tuscan sun. 



ABOVE The rear terraced patio, featuring both covered and open-air areas, highlights a collection of Tuscan villa-inspired details. “The stained cedar and over-mortared stone show the strength of Italian architecture, while the arches and turrets romanticize it,” says Nicholas.