

TRIANGLE URBAN

# HOME

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CELEBRATING INSPIRATIONAL DESIGN AND PERSONAL STYLE





# urban meld

By Lee Rhodes  
Photography by Dustin Peck

*As the sun rises over the University Park region in Raleigh, it illuminates a network of greenways and parks, nestled beside no shortage of eclectic homes.*

**B**ut one stunning, stylish house in particular perfectly melds a designer's vision with a homeowner's vision and the result fuels the imaginations of all who enter.

Interior designer Susan Tollefsen is quick to give all the credit to homeowners Dustin Smith and Burton Buffaloe ("I was just the sounding board and the accessorizer," she says), but admits to weighing in a little more heavily when it came to colors. While Dustin favored vibrant greens, Susan infused the home with other colors that, alongside Dustin's choices, add punch, such as the orange bands on the dining chairs and the cobalt-lacquered piece that occupies the breakfast room.

The end result is clean contrasts of varying hues, as well as a perfect balance of old and new. The home is new construction with a contemporary vibe, but it is also infused with vintage items: reclaimed beams, old dressers transformed into vanities, and a pair of 300-year-old church gates, straight

from Louisiana, that welcomes guests into the courtyard in the back. The homeowners, who always bring a sense of humor to the design process, like to say that their home has an old soul.

The couple fell in love with the area years ago, a dynamic community steeped in history and natural beauty. When the lot went up for sale in 2013, Dustin and Burton jumped on it, and while all who see the home today would disagree, Dustin says it's a continual work in progress.

Dustin finds ongoing inspiration in trips to flea markets and to High Point Furniture Market (he and Susan made many an action-packed trip while the home was being built), and in adding to the couple's art collection. "We have such a mix and blend of styles in our home that it's really easy to go anywhere and find a hidden treasure that we fall in love with," he explains. And for Dustin, who has always loved design and has an artistic background, the couples' home is a canvas

















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For her part, Susan described her work as “kitschy glam” and is quick to admit to a certain quirkiness, but it’s a trait that she and Dustin share; both eschew cookie-cutter design. Susan cites the family room as her favorite in the house, mainly because of the painting by local artist Shaun Richards. “The art in Dustin and Burton’s house is the jewel on the crown, for sure,” she says.

The couple agrees that the outdoor courtyard is a favorite resting spot. Dustin’s brother Chad, a landscape designer, collaborated with them on the home’s outdoor spaces. The courtyard is at once urban and peaceful, with a large dining area for entertaining, and a fireplace that’s the ideal landing spot to sip bourbon. Any nice day finds the pair out there with friends, and Susan talks about how passionate Dustin and Burton are about making the home comfortable for all who enter.

Just as they share the same eclectic style, so too do Susan and Dustin offer similar advice on designing or redecorating a home. “I always say, surround yourself with things you love, even if they might scare your grandmother,” says Susan. “If you love something, use it.”

“I keep an open eye out for things I love,” adds Dustin. “I bring them home and go room to room until I find the perfect spot.”

One caveat: “Don’t settle because an empty shelf or wall is staring at you every day,” Dustin adds. “It makes it so much more rewarding when you stumble across that perfect piece.”◆

