

# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

## WINE COUNTRY, ITALIAN STYLE

In the Heart of Napa Valley, a Contemporary Farmhouse Settles In

Architecture by Hugh Huddleson, AIA, and Karen Jensen Roberts, AIA |  
Interior Design by Jacques Saint Dizier, ASID and Richard Westbrook of Saint Dizier Design |  
Landscape Architecture by Frederika Moller | Text by Patricia Leigh Brown |  
Photography by Mary E. Nichols

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**C**onstructing a residence from scratch that feels as if it has always been there is an exacting art. Its success depends on a seemingly endless array of details—the use of fieldstone that might have been dug from local earth, for instance, or the anchoring presence of gnarled trees with languorous branches that look as though they have survived a hundred summers.

Presented with a rare tabula rasa in coveted St. Helena in California’s Napa Valley—the surrounding vineyards destined to become Duckhorn merlot—designers Jacques Saint Dizier and Richard Westbrook, of Saint Dizier Design, and architects Hugh Huddleson and Karen Jensen Roberts set about creating what Saint Dizier calls an “anti-villa,” a farmhouse-

inspired hamlet at the end of a quiet road for a peripatetic couple and their visiting family.

“We thought of the residence as if it had an agricultural purpose,” says Saint Dizier, who is based on the other side of the mountains, in Healdsburg in Sonoma County. “We wanted to bring in the vines, make the house a believable part of the vineyards.”

Both Huddleson and Saint Dizier have a long history with the couple, whose primary residences are in Arizona and Hawaii (see *Architectural Digest*, [August 2004](#)). The husband had discovered the land “by providence” four years ago; he says it was “the last piece of land contiguous to the city” and enveloped by 200 acres of grapes, with views to Spring Mountain, a fabled cabernet terroir.

The setting yearned for elegant rusticity, “a balance between dress-up and relaxed, a hodgepodge very carefully orchestrated,” the designer says. In conceptualizing the compound—a main residence, guest and caretaker’s cottages, a pool, a bocce court and an outdoor dining pergola—Huddleson sought “a sincere architecture.” He looked to both the local vernacular—stone buildings like the Victorian Beringer residence—and the stone-walled wineries of Europe.

To capture vineyard panoramas, he raised the residence three feet to allow for stone terracing. “I’ve always felt that terracing merges architecture with the landscape,” he remarks, “so that you’re not sure where the stone walls become house.”

The clients had grown weary of overstatement, seeking a welcoming retreat in which grandchildren could drink lemonade by the pool and the husband could set up his laptop at the kitchen table. In the master bedroom, “scale was important to us,” says the husband. “We were looking for warm, cozy and comfortable, not overpowering.” The room is a jewel box, with a fireplace facing a big four-poster bed. It opens onto a private terrace with a hot tub; the adjoining stone colonnade and dining pergola visually melt into the vineyards.

Saint Dizier’s approach to the interiors was based on the idea of “a collection over the years”—objects, many of them whimsical, that a fortunate treasure hunter might have found on the property. In the living room, an overscale chandelier in rusted metal with burnished gold leaf is suspended from a vaulted beam ceiling that itself could have been lifted from an old winery.

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