



MODERNISM & FAR EAST DESIGN

an extraordinary fusion

In literature, the haiku is a revered form of poetry typically consisting of three lines; consequently, a haiku can be read in seconds. Yet this brevity is deceptive; each haiku contains nuggets which, when contemplated, open realms of wide-reaching insight and wisdom.

Though it may seem unusual to relate this written art form to a house, equating a haiku with the Lititz residence of Steve and Maria makes perfect sense on a number of levels. Not only is their home filled with surprising elements but it has also been designed with a cohesiveness and purpose worthy of a poem whose words have been selected with the ultimate care. In a nutshell, their Asian-inspired house is a visual haiku.

Such a superior level of planning has been achieved thanks to the mutually-

respectful relationship Steve and Maria maintained with their chosen design-build team, Simeral Construction Company of Lititz. Working hand-in-hand with the couple, Simeral's staff helped turn what was undeniably an unexciting piece of architecture into a masterfully renovated space.

A Relationship Built on Trust and Respect

Steve and Maria's journey with Simeral began about seven years ago.

After purchasing their property, they knew the structure needed to be updated. Quite simply, the heart-shaped tub and black-and-white kitchen, among other items, were not a match with their lifestyle. As a duo who frequently travel and greatly appreciate the exotic surroundings and amenities they have experienced in Asia and other areas of the

world, they wanted their home to reflect those preferences.

Steve had known Becky Simeral, co-owner of Simeral Construction, for a number of years and contacted her to discuss building a modest addition that would include a first-floor study and second-floor jack-and-jill bedroom. It was a move on Steve's part that might surprise some; after all, Simeral's reputation has been built on constructing authentic reproductions of 18th century farmhouses. But to Steve and Maria, it was an open-and-shut decision.

"When it was time to renovate, Simeral was a natural choice," says Steve. "I knew they could handle everything."

"We'll do anything... because we can," adds Becky with a smile. "We started our business in 1987 and have built

close to 50 homes here and remodeled at least 25. We're confident in our product."

As the project with Simeral began, it became clear to everyone involved that merely attaching several-hundred square feet of living space to the existing residence would result in a disruption in the flow of the home. And the new portion would also appear (from the inside) quite unlike the rest of the house in terms of its style.

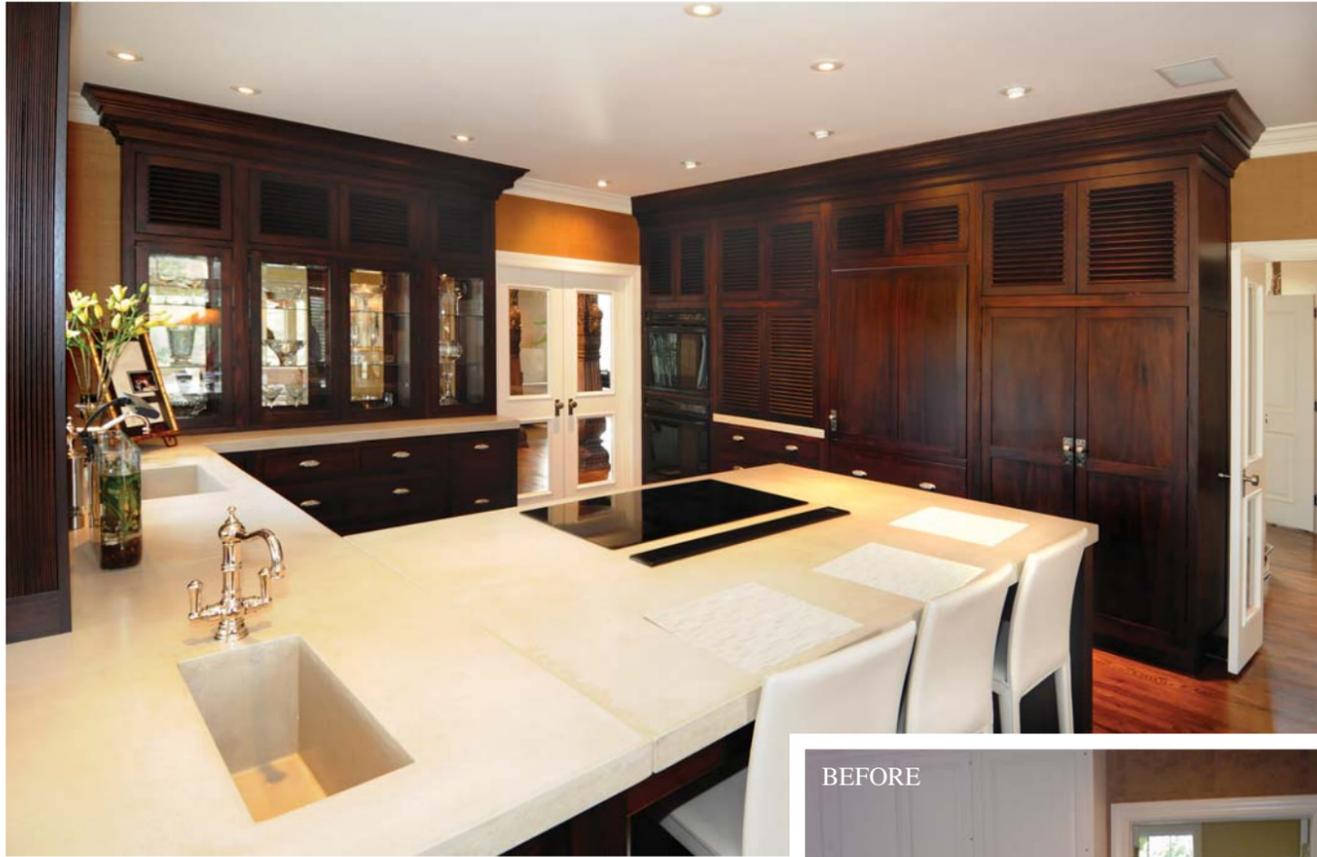
Thus, Becky and her husband, Mark, began exploring with Steve and Maria ways to bring the couple's love of Asian countries, nature and animals into every element of the structure. This type of in-depth consultation and understanding exemplifies Becky and Mark's approach to customer relationships which, more than anything else, values the client's vision and desires.

Remembers Maria with a grin, "We changed about a million things during this project! Simeral was good about changing

project description

Type:	Complete home remodel and addition.
Contractor:	Simeral Construction (see ad on p. 11)
Trade Partners:	Banta Tile & Marble Co., Inc. (see ad p. 42) B.R. Kreider & Son, Inc. (see ad p. 8) Conestoga Masonry Services LLC (see ad p. 45) Kilgore Electric, Inc. (see ad p. 39) Klausmair Construction (see ad p. 45) Lantz Slate Roof Repair (see ad p. 46) Martin Appliance (see ad p. 40) Mervin Zimmerman (see ad p. 41)
Scope:	Although the new space (garden room and two screened porches) consisted of only 540-square feet, renovations totaled 5,000-square feet. Included throughout the project were Simeral Construction Custom Cabinets. In addition to the dramatic interior changes, including a new entry complete with an oversized transom, the project included extensive landscaping.





gears as fast as we did.”

Evolution of a Vision

From that first meeting, the project took shape at a calculated pace. Fortunately for both Simeral and the homeowners, Steve and Maria were able to live elsewhere during the construction, allowing Simeral unfettered access to the residence. “We had the time to spend and didn’t have any constraints,” recalls Becky.

Says Steve, “Simeral was here every day doing something.”

Over time, the whole ambiance of the structure began to evolve into a tightly focused fusion of elements from modernism and the Far East. One of the biggest transformations took place in the kitchen.

Steve and Maria wanted their preparation and eating areas to exude light, efficiency and character. For inspiration, they showed Becky and Mark a wooden Indonesian armoire they had purchased. Simeral ultimately used the armoire’s intricate motif as a model to hand-craft all the cabinetry for the kitchen, including faces for a hidden refrigerator and refrigerated drawers.



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BEFORE

"We have 30 carpenters on staff," explains Becky. "We don't outsource this work. You need that kind of control at this level of woodworking."

At the couple's urging, Simeral also installed concrete countertops, a move that's not often seen in the central Pennsylvania region but has gained popularity elsewhere because of its "green"

reputation. Another eco-friendly element discovered by Steve and Maria and installed by Simeral was an attractive bamboo tile backsplash.

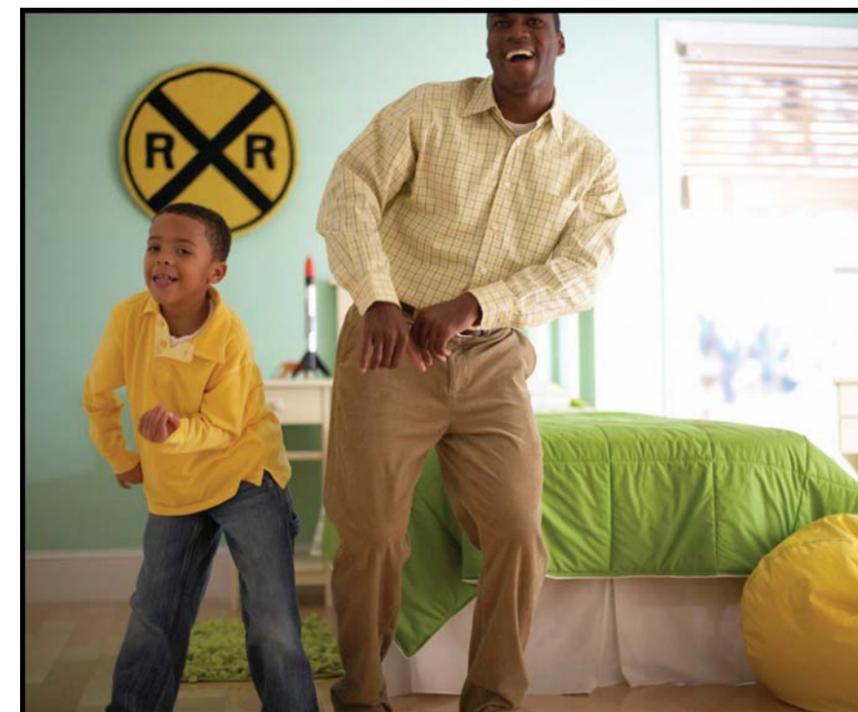
Additionally, Becky encouraged Steve and Maria to allow her to purchase for them a special induction stove top; not only does it produce heat almost instantly, but it cools just as quickly, allowing for the convenience of natural gas without the annoyance or danger of burners.

Adjacent to the kitchen, Steve and Maria turned a large, existing sunroom into a comfortable spot to watch television or, thanks to the multitude of windows, enjoy the Lancaster county change-of-seasons. Complete with a bevy of plants and specially-made tawny leather couches, this sitting area is designed to feel so natural that the boundary between the inside of the house and the great outdoors is practically blurred.



Upstairs, Simeral completely renovated the couple's quite dated master bedroom and bathroom, installing a stainless steel Japanese soaking tub and sizeable walk-in shower with a glass enclosure. For maximum convenience, a coffee bar, resplendent with a hammered nickel sink, is located steps away.

Just off the master bath is a second-story screened-in porch to one side and a walk-in closet on the other. The closet, about the size of a small bedroom (and which could easily be turned into the home's third bedroom, if needed), has been equipped with custom-made shelves, hooks and drawers. Each item of Steve and Maria's clothing and footwear has its place. Truly, it would be difficult to imagine any rival for such a well-planned area. For added visual interest, this walk-in closet can be closed-off



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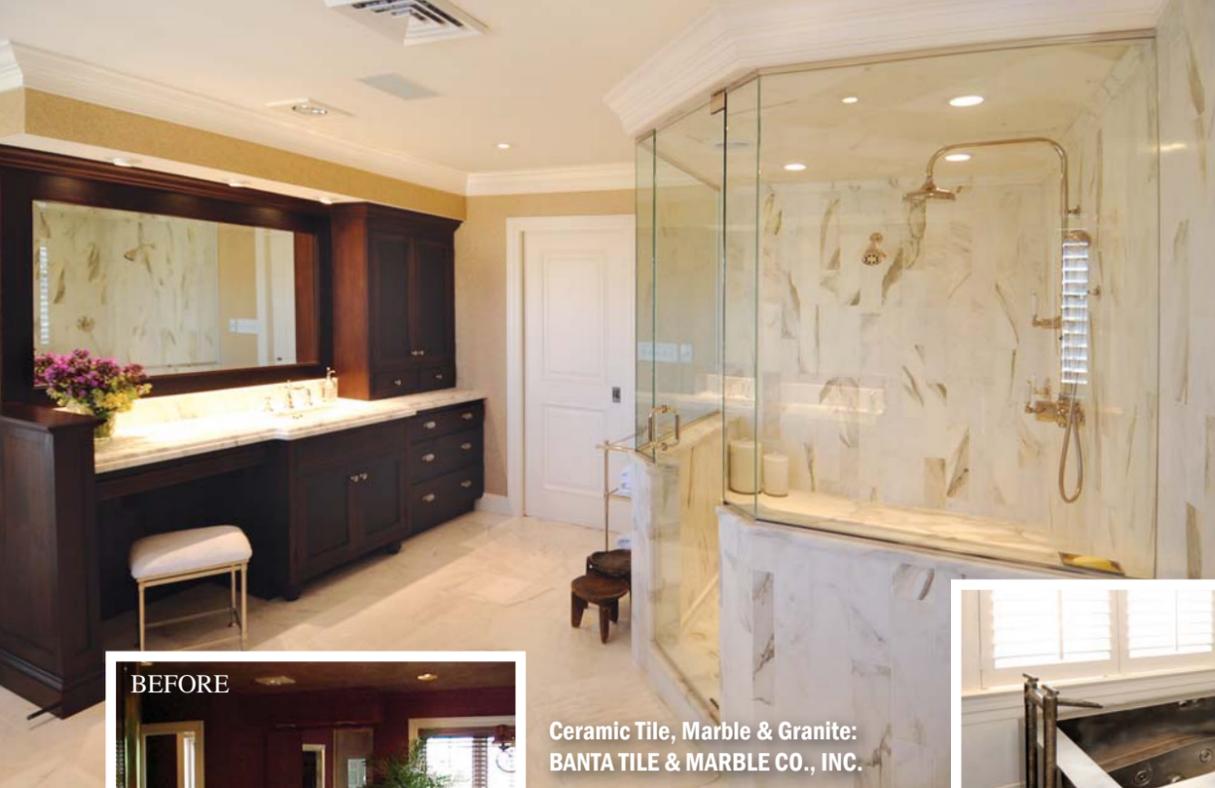
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by Italian-made doors which were engineered by Simeral to fit the space as "sliders".

Beyond the walk-in closet is the aforementioned jack-and-jill bathroom (part of the original impetus for Steve and Maria to contact Simeral) as



well as a guest bedroom. All décor is a melding of contemporary designs and Asian inspirations.

Modern Touches and Timeless Beauty

Though Steve and Maria's residence is completely unified today, it did provide Simeral with a few unique "tests" during the renovation process.

As work moved through the house, Simeral had to tackle the problem of a "sunken" living room whose floor was an awkward eight inches below the floors around it. Not only was space essentially wasted because of the odd step, but it seriously hindered the flow for any persons traversing the distance from the front door to the dining or kitchen areas.



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To solve this issue, Simeral lifted the floor and seamlessly integrated it. Now, the wooden floor boards are completely assimilated; it would be difficult for anyone to guess that the living area had ever been recessed.

In addition to raising the floor, the living room's marble fireplace also had to be lifted and, in keeping with the house's new look, was altered in the process to appear more streamlined. Its square, but organically-reminiscent, shape now complements the space rather than overtaking it.

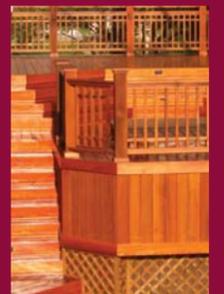
Another of Simeral's challenges during Steve and Maria's home renovation was the installation of a 200+ year old Indian arch the couple purchased from a Philadelphia antiques dealer. Made of teak, the arch weighed hundreds of pounds and was literally in pieces. "It was like a puzzle," remembers Steve.




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Simeral's team, led by master cabinet maker Mark Horst, painstakingly reassembled this one-of-a-kind object and made it fit in the doorway between the living room and formal dining room. The result is absolutely phenomenal, though Becky jokes that after the arch was in place, she wouldn't allow Steve and Maria to make any more large purchases.

Even with these tests of their abilities, Simeral's professionals never felt overwhelmed by the sheer scope of the project, even as new elements were added. As each challenge was met, the team was further motivated by the knowledge that their work was forming a masterpiece.

Renovation Imitating Life... and Art

Steve and Maria's home has been transformed into architectural poetry. With an abundance of natural light and a limitation of unnecessary clutter, it's a clean, comfortable, inspirational space in which to live, work and visit. No elements have been overlooked, from the customized heating vent covers to the subtly textured wallpaper, making everything feel as if it has always belonged.

Even the outside, thanks to Simeral's cedar-shake roof, restuccoed exterior, and copper gutters and downspouts, pulls together the atmosphere of the property.

Becky, who cites Steve and Maria's project as one of the most exciting on which Simeral has worked, loves stopping by and



feels privileged to have been able to make their building and design wishes a reality.

"Steve and Maria are very compatible," Becky muses. "They are consistent in their look, which is minimalist using traditional details. To work with people with their exquisite taste... it just makes everything easier."

In the end, perhaps the words of poet Thomas Grieg can sum up the enlightened mood of this matchless home.

*Looking at the clouds
blue in the ice-wind
space flows*

R&A