

by Bryant Ruiz Switzky

Historically Timeless

Designer David Heide creates designs that cater to the better part of history



DAVID HEIDE IS A TWIN CITIES designer with 20 years of experience restoring old homes to their former splendor while updating them with the latest amenities. His work is bold and innovative, but never jarring to the true bones of a house. Heide has a reputation for creating historically conscious design at its best.

We have the old house. What do we do next?

The first step is documentation. What did the building originally look like, both inside and out? Sometimes, you can find original drawings or photographs, which might show some of the design elements that have been removed, or how the lay-

out has been altered. The research could be as detailed as looking at layers of paint under a microscope or trying to find historic records at the Minnesota Historical Society. Or, it could be something as simple as noticing that a partic-

ular window is oddly placed and obviously new, or that construction materials don't match. You should also think about goals for the project: What parts do you want to restore as accurately as possible? What do you want to change?

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Your tag line is: Honoring the past, anticipating the future. What do you mean, exactly?

Our goal is to help homeowners remodel or add on to their historic homes in a way that is sensitive to the history and the original design of the residence while still offering the necessary functional updates. Sometimes this is about completely preserving or restoring a historic space, but more often it's about using the past as a foundation as we work to create new designs that will be functional and visually compelling in the future.

Is part of the job fixing old mistakes?

Some homes have had previous remodels that were not respectful, that simply followed the fleeting trends of the day. We try to create designs that are not rooted to a particular era, that are timeless but reflect the historic feel of a space.

Such as...?

The new kitchen is the classic example. Many historic homes originally had cramped, dark kitchens that served only a utilitarian function—they weren't intended to be the social areas that people want today. Some were remodeled in the mid-20th century and have all kinds of odd '60's and '70's design

touches that don't fit with the unchanged, historic nature of the rest of the house. So the homeowners come to us to remodel the kitchen and put in modern appliances, improve the layout, and often make the space larger, all while re-introducing an historically influenced aesthetic that fits the context of the rest of the house.

So your advice would be—?

Hire someone who knows how to work with these materials and techniques—folks who actually *can* build them like they used to. You don't need to hire Leonardo da Vinci to paint your bathroom, but you need to know when to find the right person for the job. Also, let budget drive *scale*, not *quality* of the project.

How do we tackle a remodel without doing any historical harm?

Preserve what's already there. Don't strip away the historic molding or take out the built-ins. If you decide you must make changes, consider the scale and basic design of the rest of the house. If you're going to create a new window, it should be the same size and design as others. If the others are double-hung, the new one should be, too. Go to the historical society and do some research. Teach yourself

about your house, learn about the architect, learn about other homes in the same style.

Q: Is it ever just impossible to blend old world charm with modern amenities?

Not really. Tricky, perhaps, but not impossible. For example, we did an Arts and Crafts cabin in northern Minnesota, and we hid the television and entertainment system behind the wood paneling in the living room. It just looked like paneling you would see on the walls of any historic house, but there was a hidden way to open them up to watch a movie or put on a CD. The speakers also were hidden behind a decorative fabric frieze. You can pretty much always find a way to integrate the old with the new. ■

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