



Passion for the Past

BY MELEAH MAYNARD | PHOTO BY ERIC MOORE

David Heide once met a woman who told him she thinks of old houses as used. “And who would want that?” he asks, shrugging his shoulders in mock horror. That mindset could not be more foreign to Heide, who, from the time he was a boy growing up in Des Moines, joined his mother on frequent tours of the Salisbury House, a 42-room mansion fashioned after a castle in Salisbury, England. “The house was inspiring,” Heide recalls. “I was hooked from the first time I saw it. It’s the reason I do what I do.”

Today, Heide is a residential designer. For the past 10 years, he and his 11-member team at David Heide Design Studio have created original interior designs and ideas for renovating, remodeling, and restoring older, often historic, homes. From their sixth floor office in downtown Minneapolis’ Grain Exchange Building, they have also designed a number of new buildings—some in period styles, others that are outright contemporary, such as a loft in Minneapolis’ Bridgewater

condominium complex overlooking the Mississippi River. “We’re known for our historic work, but I really don’t want to be pigeonholed into a particular style,” Heide says. “Good design transcends style.”

Still, there is something about the past that clearly moves Heide. A warm, immediately likable man, his easy grin, red hair, and freckles make him appear almost boyish when he says, in all honesty, things that illuminate his motivations: “For me, the beauty of older homes is knowing that they were meaningful to someone else in the past.”

Heide studied classical languages at Macalester College. “I remember studying in the stacks at Macalester and thinking about how so many other students had sat exactly in this spot doing their Latin homework before me,” he says. “I really like being part of that.” From there, he attended Drake University, where he particularly loved his architecture and interior design classes. After graduating in 1984 with a bachelor’s degree in architectural design, Heide continued his architecture studies

at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design (the program is now defunct) and the University of Minnesota. While still in school, he went to work for one of his teachers, Bob Mack of MacDonald & Mack Architects, a Minneapolis firm specializing in high-profile historic restoration projects, including the Split Rock Lighthouse and the Purcell-Cutts house.

"At the time, Bob said he and Stuart MacDonald didn't have a full-time job for me, just one project," Heide says. "But I ended up staying for 11 years." The experience was akin to an old-fashioned apprenticeship that gave him the skills to establish himself as a designer. "They were gracious and kind and, in many ways, did some additional parenting that I needed. I learned so much from them about life and the world, and, of course, I learned a lot of what I know about architecture."

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It was also Mack and MacDonald who encouraged Heide to pursue his love of residential architecture. Heide and his partner Michael Crull, who now works as an interior designer at Heide's firm, had put their home on the Summit Hill House tour where a neighbor saw it and asked if Heide could do a design for her house, too. "Bob and Stu encouraged me to moonlight," Heide says. "They even let me use an extra office they had. The one thing [they] said was, 'When the day comes that you get more phone calls than us, we have to talk.'" Two years later, in 1997, that day came, and Heide started his own firm.

"It was great experience to work on all of those historic buildings," Heide says. "But, for me, there's more meaning in working on people's houses. The concept of making a home for someone is really appealing." **MH**

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