



COMPOUND COLLABORATION

Written by Amelia Jeffers

When a central Ohio builder put Mark Huffman and Todd Parker in touch to collaborate on a large Tartan Field residence over 20 years ago, the pair were happy to reconnect—but had no idea how frequently and at what scale their work together would evolve. Though they were college peers at the University of Cincinnati's highly ranked College of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning, the duo had taken disparate paths to the top of the luxury home hierarchy just as the local housing market was booming. Huffman started his interior architectural design and decor firm Huffman & Huffman (co-owned with his mother, Terri) after successful stints in New York, Chicago, and Boston, where he had honed his eye and built a repertoire of experience at legendary companies and institutions. Meanwhile, Parker likes to say he "came to Columbus to escape Pataskala," but his quick wit belies a respected talent that was first recognized by the venerated architect Brian Kent Jones before Parker stepped out to found his own architecture practice, F5 Design—within a year of the start of Huffman and Huffman.

Over the next two decades, the talented team would find themselves working together—at times by happenstance and others by design (pun intended). When asked which comes first, the interiors or the architectural plan, each points to the other in a charming Laurel and Hardy moment. They do agree: no matter whose inspiration starts the project, an early collaboration results in better outcomes for the client—and a more cohesive finished product. I worked with both on a Parade of Homes project in New Albany (my personal residence) and find the quality of their work to be only bested by their warmth, kindness and patience for the process. Though their personal tastes differ, when it comes to reading a client, understanding their vision and bringing it to life, they are sensible and pragmatic, sharing a knack for creative design, collaboration and a keen eye for luxury and detail. Basically, when your architect can finish your interior designer's sentences, and you genuinely like spending time with them both, you know you are in good shape.





In the case of an impressive project in a tony suburb outside of Columbus, the clients had already engaged Parker when Huffman was called for interiors. For the homeowners, the residence represented a dream come true and a definite “upsize.”

An amazing 13,000 square feet and 6.5 acres later, the extraordinary compound is the couple’s gratifying reward for hiring talent and trusting them completely. Huffman and Parker describe the couple as inspired, with an enthusiasm that was contagious—and a focus that was more fluid than formulaic and always placed family first.

Armed with a few photos from the internet, the couple had strong thoughts about several elements but were open to the

expertise and guidance of Huffman and Parker. As the size of the project grew, everyone involved knew that extra effort needed to be made to maintain the chic but cozy and relaxed ambiance at the core of their vision. While Parker was charged with creating substantial sightlines (a goal was to keep the whole family within eye or ear shot), Huffman endeavored to keep the massive structure from feeling too cavernous. Contrasting elements were used to create a connection and balance between first floor living spaces by utilizing the same stunning marrone travertine in each. The same rich brown stone was introduced in various shapes and sizes in order to create visual interest in the kitchen, at the ample fireplace in the adjacent family room and as an accent in the medallion-anchored foyer floor (designed by Huffman under the direction of the homeowners).





A tonal approach was taken to color throughout, with layers of tactile materials to add warmth and texture. In the dining room, for example, grasscloth walls juxtapose velvet chairs, with sophisticated lighting and a classic walnut-inlaid table. A hand-glazed coffered ceiling contributes to the overall sense of refinement and luxury.

On the clients' list of must-haves was spirit of recreation for the whole family. The resulting spaces are enviable. For the kids, a large bunk room invites cousins and friends to camp, craft and play. Outdoors, a large pool is opened early and closed late to extend the season and encourage outdoor activities. The property even includes a pond stocked with what I am told are pretty big fish, contributing to the emphases on fitness and fun. When it is time for a little rest and relaxation for the big

kids, adults retreat in the evening to the swanky basement bar with big screen tvs, a lush and vibrant banquette, wine room and comfy sectional. In the morning, fitness calls with a large exercise room only steps away.

I asked the pair when their work winds down on a project so large. Two years in, Huffman and Parker are still at it, revising, updating and, believe it or not, adding. "It's too easy to work with Mark," Parker laughs. Huffman adds, "No one here has a God complex. It's great to work with someone whose work and preferences you know; it helps us all to stay in our lanes, and keeps things simple and fun for the client." If their collaboration on this compound is any indication, the Huffman and Parker partnership should last for decades more. ■