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BY SUSAN BADY, SENIOR EDITOR, DESIGN

Stairway to Heaven

A great staircase does more than move people from point A to point B.

In a finely detailed custom home, the staircase isn't merely functional; it's an art form that in some cases can take a year or more to complete. The stair systems featured here were designed to delight the eye, complement their surroundings and create an experience for homeowners and guests.



Stair Sculpture

This unique helical staircase serves as the central core for vertical movement throughout the home. Its steel framework has a veneer of 3/4-inch mahogany and lacewood. All stair treads are inlaid with honed limestone. The structural tempered curved glass railings help support the custom bronze metal balustrades. A 12-foot-diameter skylight cascades light through decorative glass floor panels in the upper balcony.

Builder: Homeowners

Architect: DesRosiers Architects

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BETH SINGER

Arts and Crafts Homage

This home was designed for a couple who had an affinity for manor-style architecture but with a contemporary bent. Architect Wayne Visbeen played off the Arts and Crafts movement and other classic styles with beefy woodwork that is especially evident in the mahogany staircase. Serving all three floors of the home, the staircase has large, square newel posts; ornamental buttons; and 2 1/4 inch handrails. It took 12 weeks to assemble.

Builder: Grand Concept Homes

Architect: Visbeen Associates

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL BUCK/M BUCK STUDIO



Formal Wear

Designed for a Georgian-style home near Charleston, S.C., this stately staircase reflects the owner's appreciation for detail. Its open, free-standing box/curve design was a challenge to execute because the anchor points are at the bottom step. The stair has a 6-inch-by-6-inch knee wall and raised-panel wainscot. The treads are stained Brazilian cherry and the balusters and newels hammered square steel with a center "boss" or ornament. The steel is powder-coated with a black industrial finish, while the bosses are powder-coated in a copper patina finish. The stained mahogany handrail is an over-the-post design with double volutes (decorative, spiral-shaped endings). Using shop-built components, the stair assembly and trimwork, done on site, took 12 to 14 weeks.

Builder: Philip Smith General Contractors

Architect: Stephen Herlong & Associates, Architects

PHOTOGRAPHY BY WARREN LIEB