

# Smuckler Architecture, Inc.

By Mason Riddle

The problem for Jack Smuckler was that his designs for both residential and architectural structures were not being realized with the quality of construction and eye for detail that he envisioned. As a licensed architect who received his degree from the University of Minnesota, and who later worked for such recognized firms as HGA and Miller Hanson & Westerbeck before he started Smuckler Architecture, Inc. in 1978, Jack took matters into his own hands. In 1980, he was certified as a licensed builder and, soon thereafter, started Smuckler Custom Homes, Inc., which finally ensured Jack that his homes would look and function exactly as he had envisioned them.

"I care a lot about my product, and I understand my product," Jack says, adamantly, sitting in the conference room of his Edina office, whose walls are blanketed with large photographs showcasing his homes. "And because I care, and because I am also the builder, I can make adjustments and tweak the details, if needed, as a home is being constructed." Jack estimates that he builds about 90% of the homes he designs. Although most

of his homes are found in Minnesota, he has designed homes in warmer locales such as Palm Springs, CA; Naples, FL; Phoenix, AZ; and the Virgin Islands.

After Jack secured his first residential client in 1978, his business grew rapidly, mostly by word of mouth. Currently he designs and builds about eight homes a year and an occasional commercial building; such as Becker Furniture World or the Suburban Chevrolet dealership. Smuckler Architecture, Inc. builds high-end, custom-designed luxury homes. Jack's homes range in price from \$1 million to \$5 million, but his average home costs between \$1.5 and \$2 million. Admittedly, these are spacious homes that range in size from 6,000 to 8,000 square feet, although Jack has designed homes as small as 4,000 square feet and as large as 12,000 square feet. When asked if he could design a 1,500-square-foot home for a writer, Jack hesitated. "I could if the budget allowed for quality materials and detail," he responded. Noting that smaller homes can be good, not to mention the energy savings.

Great room — lake view



PHOTO BY JOHN HANSON



PHOTO BY JOHN HANSON

Dining room

Jack designs homes in a variety of styles, but his signature homes are soft contemporary, often stucco, stone and yards of glass, or contemporary versions of more historical styles. For example, Jack recently designed an English Manor-style home, overlooking Rush Creek Golf Course in Maple Grove. It sports the expected stone cladding and pitched roofs, but has loads of windows to maximize views. "The style of the home and its floor plan are generated by the clients' need," he states. "I meet numerous times with the client to identify how they live — whether they entertain a lot, what their children do or if they have an art collection they want displayed to full advantage. Some clients come to my office with a whole notebook full of pictures and ideas and others come with very little. Some clients are very versed in the language of architecture and, for others, you need to lay more groundwork so they are comfortable speaking about their needs."

Jack laughs when he describes one client who came to him wanting to build a *Miami Vice* house. "So, I designed and built a *Miami Vice* house with flat roofs, rounded corner details, tons of glass and a swimming pool. When clients ask about the house, I just say it is my *Miami Vice* house. Even his more traditional homes have the signature stamp of Jack Smuckler. This includes,

regardless of style, an open floor plan where traffic patterns flow easily from room to room. Most are single story on the approach but have a lower level walkout onto a lawn, gardens or a pool. Natural light is also critical to his designs. Most of Jack's homes have great stretches of windows, often spanning floor to ceiling or even two stories that take advantage of all available light, even on December's darkest days.

Smuckler Architecture homes are also noteworthy for the copious amounts of architectural detail, such as barrel vaults, high ceilings, bold sculptural soffits and curved walls, and display niches that define each room. Generally, the home will have numerous display art wall niches of varying sizes for the display of sculpture, crafts or decorative art items such as an antique Chinese teapot or piece of silver. He encourages his clients to consider artistic details, which will make their homes unique. A recent example is a handmade glass screen wall dividing the entryway from the dining room that is featured in one client's house. Jack aesthetic supports details like this, ones that visually separate two rooms but allow for light and sound to pass through freely. Jack also looks for a natural, open flow from one space to the next, a flow that works as effectively for a group of two as it does for 40.





**Kitchen**

Jack also uses quality, high-end materials such as plywood sheeting and Douglas fir lumber and exotic woods for interior details and flooring. Kitchens usually have granite counters, islands with seating and plenty of room to cook. His baths are tiled and offer luxury fixtures and plenty of storage. Jack does not consider himself a “green”

architect; he does not use many recycled materials. However, his homes are energy efficient. He uses extra foam insulation, usually to an R-60 rating, radiant floor heat and high-efficiency, geothermal heating and cooling systems. Pella or Marvin double-paned windows are installed in all of his homes.



**Master bedroom**

Smuckler Architecture, Inc. does not build model homes. “If I build a spec home, I will move into it myself,” Jack states. “Home tours are the way to see my buildings — that is the advertising. I work a mutually beneficial arrangement out with my clients that the home will be on the tour.” Smuckler Architecture, Inc. has numerous awards to its credit, including the 2006 Peoples Choice Award and the



**Kitchen view from great room**

PHOTOS BY JOHN HANSON





Master bath

PHOTO BY JOHN HANSON





Exterior front



Jack Smuckler

2005 Reggie Award of Excellence in the category of Single Family Homes. They have also won the Trillium Award for Best Architecture and a National AIA Award for Design Excellence. In 2005, the book *Leading Residential Architects* featured Jack as one of the top 50 architects nationwide.

The home featured in *Builder/Architect* magazine is on a lake in Minnetonka. The two-story walkout is spacious, but not obscenely large, and is approximately 5,500 square feet with two-story glass windows affording dramatic views of the lake. The first floor boasts 22-foot high ceilings in the great room adding to the sense of openness. The home includes a great room, dining room, roomy kitchen with a butler pantry, four bedrooms and three-and-a-half baths, and an in-house elevator. "Many of my clients are planning on the day when they need access to two floors but can't do the steps, whether that is from knee surgery or old age," adds Jack. The home also features a lot of positive and negative space with a number of display niches, varying ceiling heights and detailed soffits. The unfinished lower level has been designed for future expansion with an elaborate game room.

"I enjoy working with my clients and we usually become friends over the process of designing and building them a home. "It makes me very happy to create their vision. I often end up keeping in touch with them after the house is done. It is very satisfying that people like you enough to remain in contact long after their home is finished"

Ultimately, Jack sees himself as an artist or a sculptor. "For me, I am not simply an architect. I am someone who makes unique works of art. I have ideas, I am inspired and I create a work of art that someone buys and lives in." ■

## Smuckler Architecture, Inc. Preferred Suppliers

### Reknowned Exteriors

5909 92nd Ave. N.  
Brooklyn Park, MN 55443  
(763) 428-4300

### Granite Tops

1480 Prairie Drive  
Cold Spring, MN 56320  
(320) 685-3005

### Warners' Stellian

#### Edina

3533 West 70th Street  
Edina, MN 55435  
(612) 920-0640

#### St. Paul

1711 North Snelling Avenue  
Saint Paul, MN 55113  
(651) 645-3481

#### Apple Valley

7665 West 148th Street  
Apple Valley, MN 55124  
(952) 891-4700

#### Maple Grove

12772 Bass Lake Road  
Maple Grove, MN 55369  
(763) 551-0888

#### Woodbury

1750 Weir Drive  
Woodbury, MN 55125  
(651) 714-9790

#### Lappin Lighting

222 North Second Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
(612) 339-5555

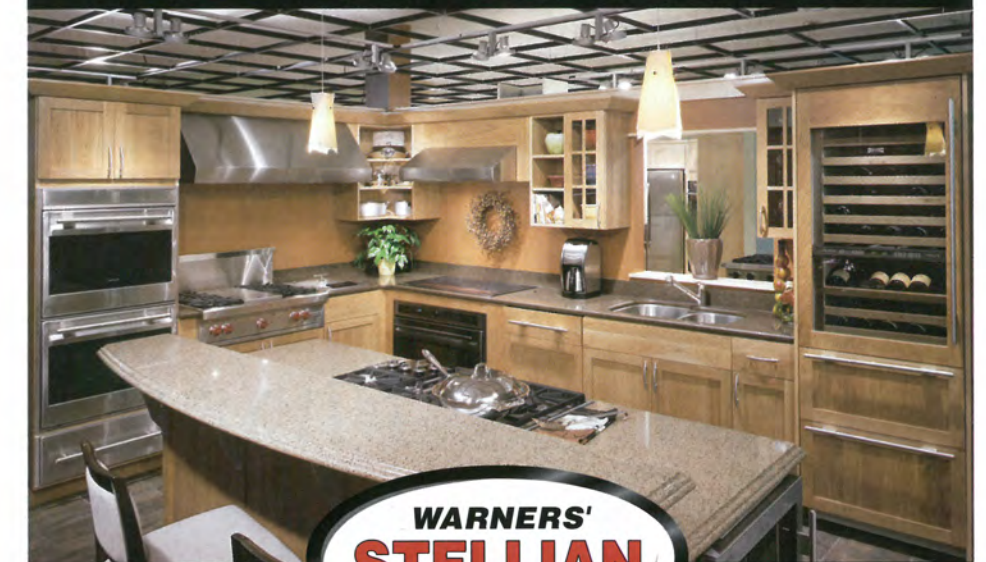
### Westonka Mechanical

**Contractors Inc.**  
6501 County Road 15  
Mound, MN 55364  
(952) 472-4959

### Genz-Ryan

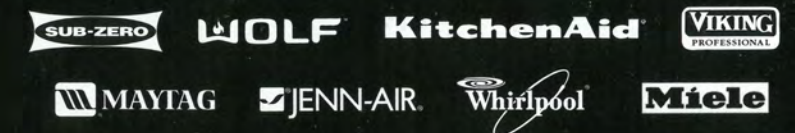
2200 West Highway 13  
Burnsville, MN 55337  
(952) 767-1000 ■

## Your Professional Resource for Fine Appliances



### Smuckler Custom Builders Feature Appliances from Warners' Stellian

Warners' Stellian features over 30 major appliance brands displayed in designer showrooms. Highly trained sales associates, exceptional customer service, free metro area delivery and recycling.



St. Paul (651) 645-3481  
Edina (612) 920-0640  
Woodbury (651) 714-9790

Apple Valley (952) 891-4700  
Maple Grove (763) 551-0888  
Minneapolis (612) 825-6465

[www.WarnersStellian.com](http://www.WarnersStellian.com)

For more information call our Builder Division (651) 726-1649