

**At Home with
DAN BROWN**

DESIGN BY DA VINCI CODE

Filled with secret passages, mysterious symbols and buried treasure, the author's estate brings his novels to life

BY SHARON COTLIAR

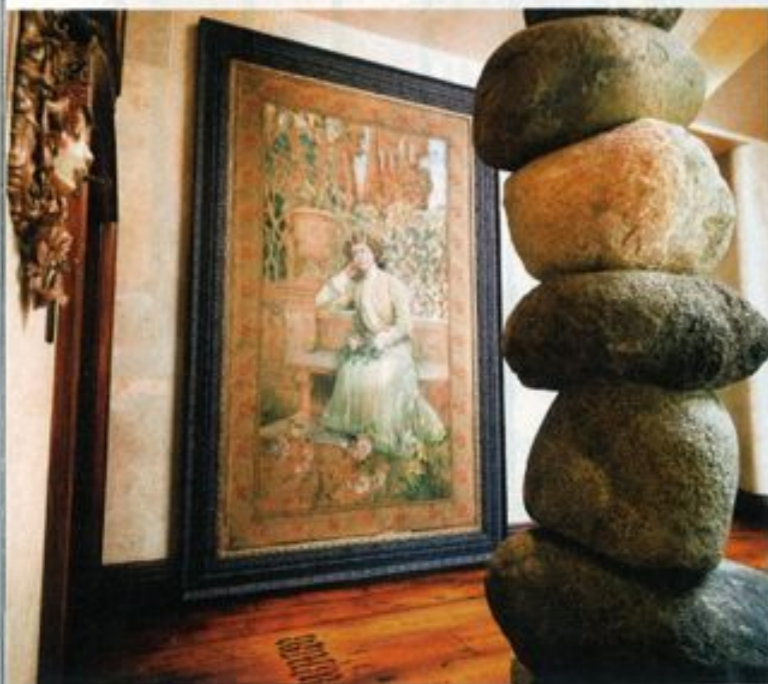


The Da Vinci Code's Robert Langdon returns in Brown's new novel, *Inferno*, inspired by Dante's epic poem about hell.

ROOMS: LYNN WALLBERG INC./STYLIST: JANIE MAGGIORI/ENVOI INC.

Nothing is quite what it seems inside Dan Brown's sprawling stone mansion in New Hampshire. "Everything moves," the *Da Vinci Code* author says, chuckling as he pushes a mahogany bookshelf to reveal a secret passageway leading out to a sculpture garden. Down a nearby hall, he points to a portrait of a woman, gently presses the frame, and voilà: The wall rotates into a recording room, where the onetime songwriter still composes music. How many hidden alcoves are there? "Six that we admit to," he says. Describing the house, his editor and friend Jason Kaufman says, "It's like stepping into the pages of a Dan Brown novel."

That's what Brown, 48, had in mind when he and his wife, Blythe, 60, a painter, spent six years expanding and renovating the former hunting lodge they'd bought a few weeks before *The Da Vinci Code* was published in 2003. "We designed everything ourselves. This would be a house where Robert Langdon lives," says Brown, referring to the Harvard professor of symbology who's the hero of the megaselling *Code* and three other Brown novels, including his latest, *Inferno*, out this month. Along with the hidden passageways, which delight his two young nephews ("They get lost in here!"), there are codes and symbols everywhere. Even the stones in his driveway, Brown confesses, "are laid out according to the Golden Ratio." And lest he forget the fans who made it all possible, there's a bookcase in the library that holds one copy of each of his books from around the world—in 52 languages. "We call it," he says, "the Fortress of Gratitude."



TRICKS & TROMPE L'OEIL

In the gallery the wall behind the painting is a revolving door, the floor is inlaid with intricate letters spelling out Earth, Air, Fire and Water (as in *Angels & Demons*), and two cairns—replicas of ancient stone piles often used to mark a path—stand sentry. "We put them in the house as symbolic guideposts, reminders to stay on track in all we do," says Brown.



A FANCIFUL LIBRARY

"I write on a laptop in here," Brown says of the library, which is filled with treasures he and Blythe have picked up on their travels, including an antique chair with lions carved in the arms (on the second floor).

A GUARD IN THE GARDEN

The stone statue of an Inukshuk, a Native American protective symbol, "is meant to protect the back of the house," Brown says. The bench is just for relaxing. Brown's wife, Blythe, "uses it for her morning coffee... to sit in the garden and watch the world come to life."



OTHERWORLDLY ENTRY

Brown and his wife designed the entryway, using recycled flooring from castles, châteaux and churches. "If these floors could talk..." Brown says. The pieces form a compass rose with a templar cross and a fleur-de-lis "arrow" that points due north, symbols that recur in Brown's books.



INDULGING IN ART

"This sculpture is by Ruth Bloch, one of Blythe's favorite artists," Brown says. "We saw it in St. Paul de Vence and decided it needed to be in the house. I don't have an affinity for cars, jewels or fast boats. Blythe and I are passionate about art and architecture, and this house was our one big luxury."

