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

Photographs by BEN HOFFMANN

The Da Vinci Code's Robert Langdon returns in Brown's new novel, Inferno, inspired by Dante's epic poem about hell.
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 nearly half-mile path is a portrait of a woman, gently presses the frame, and viole. The wall rotates into recording room, where the onetime songwriter still composes music. How many hidden rooms are there? "Six that we know of," 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, 66, 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 Sir Robert Langdon lives," says Brown, referring to the Harvard professor of symbology who's the hero of the megaselling Codex 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, Blythe 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 an encyclopedia of each of his books from around the world—in 52 languages.

"We call it," he says, "the Fortress of Gratitude."

TRICKS & TRUMPELOE

In the gallery, the wall behind the painting is revolving door, the floor is lined with intricate letters spelling out Earth, Air, Fire, and Water (as in Angels & Demons), and two cameo--replicas of ancient stone are often used to mark apollo--indian centers. "We put them in the house as symbolic guideposts, reminders to stay on track in all we do," says Brown.

A QUAD IN THE GARDEN

The stone statue of an Inukshuk, a Native American protective symbol, "out to protect the back of the house," Brown says. "The whole area is just for relaxing. Blythe's office is here, 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 foundry, for the sake of chastening castles, churches, and churches, "I like the floors could talk," Brown says. The pieces form a compass rose with a tangerine 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 Block, one of Blythe's favorite artists," Brown says. "We saw it in St. Paul, bought it, and decided it needed to be in our house. I don't have an affinity for arts, but it's the architecture, and this house was our one big luxury."

AFRICAN LIBRARY

"That's a baby ivory," says Brown, who has letters spelling out Earth, Air, Fire, and Water (as in Angels & Demons), and two relics—replicas of ancient stone are often used to mark apollo—indian centers. "We put them in the house as symbolic guideposts, reminders to stay on track in all we do," says Brown.

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