

## About the Builder of Laura Creek

Award-winning designer Thomas Markovic brings his "Craftsman-cottage-farmhouse" style to Marietta with his new development, "Laura Creek"

By Karen Pressley  
[profitablewords@msn.com](mailto:profitablewords@msn.com)  
678-640-0535

Owning a dream home is on the priority list of many Americans. Fortunately, there are dreamers among us who help make that possible by designing and building houses that quench the varied tastes of homebuyers. When one architectural designer relocated to Atlanta from Florida 11 years ago, there was no doubt in his mind that he could provide dream homes to Atlantans and experience success in the city's home construction boom.

Award-winning architectural designer Thomas Markovic has provided custom homes from Chicago to northern Michigan to Florida Gulf coastal towns like Venice and Sarasota. Since 1994, Markovic has been responsible for several thousand homes built in the Atlanta area, whether as the builder or as the designer for some of Atlanta's largest builders. Locations of his home designs in the Woodstock area include Towne Lake, The Cottages at Bells Ferry, and The Enclave at Towne Lake Hills. In the Canton area, you can see his homes in Bridge Mill, River Green, The Villas at Downing Creek and the Falls of Cherokee. Laura Creek, his current development in Cobb County's Town Center Mall area off Barrett Parkway and Prado Lane, has brought Markovic's customized version of "Craftsman" style to Marietta.

Markovic has a long-established love affair with this blended Craftsman style. He began designing homes in 1965 after high school, when he began his architectural training at Chicago Technical College. By 1970, Markovic's designs appeared in "Modern Carpentry," a textbook featuring his construction methods, and used in trade schools across the country. His home designs have been featured in trade publications including "Professional Builder," "Architect/Builder" and "Builder" Magazine. Since 1994, Markovic has won numerous awards from the Atlanta Homebuilder's Association.

Markovic's Craftsman style is unlike traditional, contemporary or Victorian homes widely available across Atlanta. When you walk into one of his homes, you are struck by the sense of space, the openness of the rooms, and a rustic, boldly square styling with details borrowed from the past. Markovic describes his Laura Creek development as "a blend of Craftsman-cottage-farmhouse style" which he said is "almost a contradiction of architectural terms." The emergence of his blended style springs from his desire to respond to the needs of homeowners. Markovic's memories and feelings about the small town neighborhoods of his past serve as the strongest influence in his designs.

"People should come home to a warm, comfortable atmosphere," he said. "We get that feeling in a home from older things like antiques and history, so coming home should be like walking into a part of your heritage. You can't get that in a modern home."

In its conception at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the original Craftsman style contrasted with its architectural predecessors, especially with decorative excesses like Victorian "gingerbread" and the British-influenced Queen Anne style. In contrast, the Craftsman style emerged as an interaction of the natural environment with ongoing cultural forces of the time, carrying details that seem to link homes with the earth. Low-pitched roofs with broad, overhanging eaves characterize the expression of 1930s Craftsman style in its one to one-and-a-half story "bungalow." Porch pillars, broad at the base, exaggerated the tie to the earth. The Craftsman-style motive has always been to design and construct in honest craft traditions: iron and copper blacksmithing, pottery, hand weaving, and hand-hewn materials.

In Laura Creek, Markovic has modified the Craftsman bungalow style into two-story homes more in demand by today's families, with details borrowed from turn-of-the-century cottages and farmhouses.

“Creative” is the first word that springs to mind when you walk into one of Markovic's homes. Interesting architectural details accent windows, archways and staircases. He infuses handcrafted touches into nearly every nook and cranny, underscoring his passion for well-crafted woodwork and artistic usage of natural materials like handcrafted wood trim, natural tile in kitchens and bathrooms, lead or stained glass accents in windows and doors, stacked stone fireplaces, hammered copper, bronze or pewter doorknobs. Bead board, rough-cut boards, and textured walls are seen frequently on his kitchen ceilings, porches, or bathroom walls. The hardware, including door and cabinet hinges, latches and knobs, looks individually selected for each house. Even his light fixtures look hand-wrought by blacksmiths or stained glass artisans.

Markovic's concept of a comfortable home includes a well-thought out floor plan centered on entertaining and family unity. His roomy kitchens include a spacious eating area conducive to family gatherings, with no formal dining room. A double-sided fireplace between the kitchen and living room adds warmth to both sides, making the hearth the family center. Laura Creek homes typically include cozy front porches, with the option to leave them open, make a screened porch, or glass them in to create a sunroom for more living space.

Markovic realizes Craftsman style may be new to many homebuyers, so his model home, the “Misty Meadow,” provides ample ideas on how to decorate the interior with furnishings and colors in harmony with the natural materials and architectural details of his houses. His color palette includes rich earth tones in shades of terra cotta, pewter, leather browns, shades of rusty metals, dusty turquoise and muted golds. These colors offer a comfortable and attractive backdrop for personal collections of pottery, woven rugs, stained glass windows, hammered metal containers, tapestries, original art, antiques, and leather furniture.

Original Craftsman style homes built in the 1920s and '30s still exist in the older sections of Midtown Atlanta, Virginia Highlands and Decatur. The “Craftsman” movement in the area of American domestic arts and architecture emerged at the turn of the century in America, as an outgrowth of the English Arts and Crafts movement that had blossomed under the leadership of acclaimed designer William Morris (1834-1896). European designer Gustav Stickley published his magazine, “The Craftsman,” in New York from 1901 to 1916 that promoted the “craft ethic.” The craft ethic was a reaction to the fear of “dehumanization” by the industrial society in America. It rejected the aesthetic forms determined by the machine, and sought to create a new environment based on the ethic of “craft”—straightforward forms that expressed the unity of art and handiwork. The Craftsman style that rose during the turn of the century has continued to influence American domestic architecture since.

Client: Tom Markovic, Laura Creek Homes/feature

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