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From the Editor



W

hile I always praise the talented architects, designers and builders who are featured, one consistent comment in this issue was the contributions made by the homeowners of their projects. It's proof that great home design is the outcome of accommodating the families who will live there. As you flip through these pages of featured homes, it's never been more evident that luxury goes hand-in-hand with comfort and personal style.

Joseph Smith designed the contemporary cover home, while the homeowner carried with him a floorplan and collaborated on the project through completion. Rick Burleson designed a sprawling weekend home for a Houston family who spent years contemplating the perfect retreat. Texas Construction Company built a home for owners who wanted space to share with their grandchildren while also incorporating many aging-in-place features. And individual space for each family member was just one goal in a design by Martha O'Hara Interiors.

Oysters and tea may or may not be a perfect pairing, but both are perfect for this time of year. In Food Design, learn a little about the myths surrounding oysters (Aphrodisiacs? Yes, it's true!) and see how chefs are serving oysters in raw applications as well as delicious chicken fried and grilled dishes. As winter finally enters the scene, it's time to put down the iced sweet tea and cozy up to a steaming cup served with traditional sandwiches and scones, and some other delightful accompaniments. Tea time is more popular than ever with many restaurants brewing the perfect pot.

As we move through the holiday season, everyone at Home Design & Décor magazine wishes you a most wonderful, healthy and fresh start to a brand new year.

Happy Holidays,

Trisha

Trisha Doucette



On The Cover:

Joseph Smith Architects' modern and sleek U-shaped design provides privacy even with expansive glass windows throughout this 4,200-square-foot, one-story home. Page 20



Builder: Seven Custom Homes, Austin, TX

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EDITOR'S ESSENTIALS

TASTE ELEVATED IN CASTROVILLE

I have raved about Taste Elevated's yummy spreads and mustard seeds before, but I want to brag about owner Lori Krieger's efforts to showcase her town's fellow shopkeepers. Castroville should be on everyone's radar as a perfect day or weekend destination. With historic lodging, great restaurants and an assortment of shops carrying everything from antiques, clothing, pottery and, of course, the gourmet wine and food selections at Taste Elevated, this little Alsatian town really has it all. Simply strolling the streets and admiring the historic Alsatian architecture is a treat. And thanks to Lori, you can participate in various drawings and special activities at over a dozen shops throughout the year.

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ROSSINI ITALIAN BISTRO

Inspired by his Italian grandmother's recipes and years of cooking in celebrated kitchens across the US, Chef Andrew Paparella is blending old world preparations with a contemporary flair at his Castle Hills restaurant. His menu includes my authentic Italian faves like polpette and porchetta, and wine dinners and holiday specials are featured regularly. Now he's partnering with his nutritionist wife Kay Spears Paparella for their launch of Red Bird Farmacy, an organic vegan soup line that sells out every Sunday at the Castle Hills Farmers Market. Sold in 16 ounce bottles, current flavors include Butternut Squash and Sweet Potato, Carrot Coconut, Tomato Basil Orange and English Pea, all perfect for the season. They even provide meal planning. Folks with families, busy lifestyles or specific dietary requirements can visit with the chef-nutritionist couple to put together a custom meal plan. For more information about this special service, visit Kayspears.com or call their office at 210.764.2121. Rossinibistro.com

SIGNATURE

Chef Andrew Weissman's latest venture is part of San Antonio's beautiful La Cantera Resort transformation. Housed in a freestanding building on the property, and designed by Jill Giles, the décor combines 17th century antiques, Mexican tiles and South Texas ironwork, and the menu is equally as eclectic with seasonal game and seafood, local olive oils, handpicked herbs and fine European cheeses. Says the chef himself, "It's an experience that begins with the sounds of driving up on pea gravel, and having someone there to greet you on the drive. If you are at all familiar with countryside Michelin-rated restaurants, we want it to be like that. You just sort of happen upon it, we want it to have a sense of place and feel clearly like something you'd find in South Texas, but also something that wouldn't feel out of place in the South of France." We are so lucky! Signaturerestaurant.com

Austin-San Antonio

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Publisher

Louis Doucette

Editor

Trisha Doucette

Contributing Editors

Celia M. Vrnak,

Kayvon Leath - Austin NARI, Martha Bizzell - NARI San Antonio

Contributing Writers

Claudia Alarcon, Julie Catalano,
Mauri Elbel, Cheryl Van Tuyl Jividen

Photography

Paul Finkel, Jake Holt, Lars Frazer, Brian Mihealsick,
Daniel Nadelbach, Siggí Ragnar, Jennifer Siu-Rivera

Architectural Publicist

Diane Purcell – Dianepurcell.com

Advertising Sales

Sandy Weatherford, Gerry Lair,
Janis Maxymof, Janet Sandbach

Business Manager

Vicki Schroder

Design and Production

Tim Shaw – The Shaw Creative – theshawcreative.com

Printing and Direct Mail

SmithPrint

Phone

512.385.4663, Austin - 210.410.0014, San Antonio

Address

10036 Saxet Drive / Boerne, Texas 78006

Email

louisd@homedesigndecormag.com

Website

www.homedesigndecormag.com

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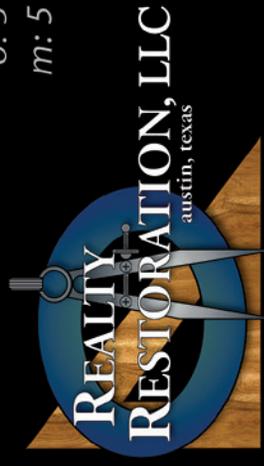
contributing editors

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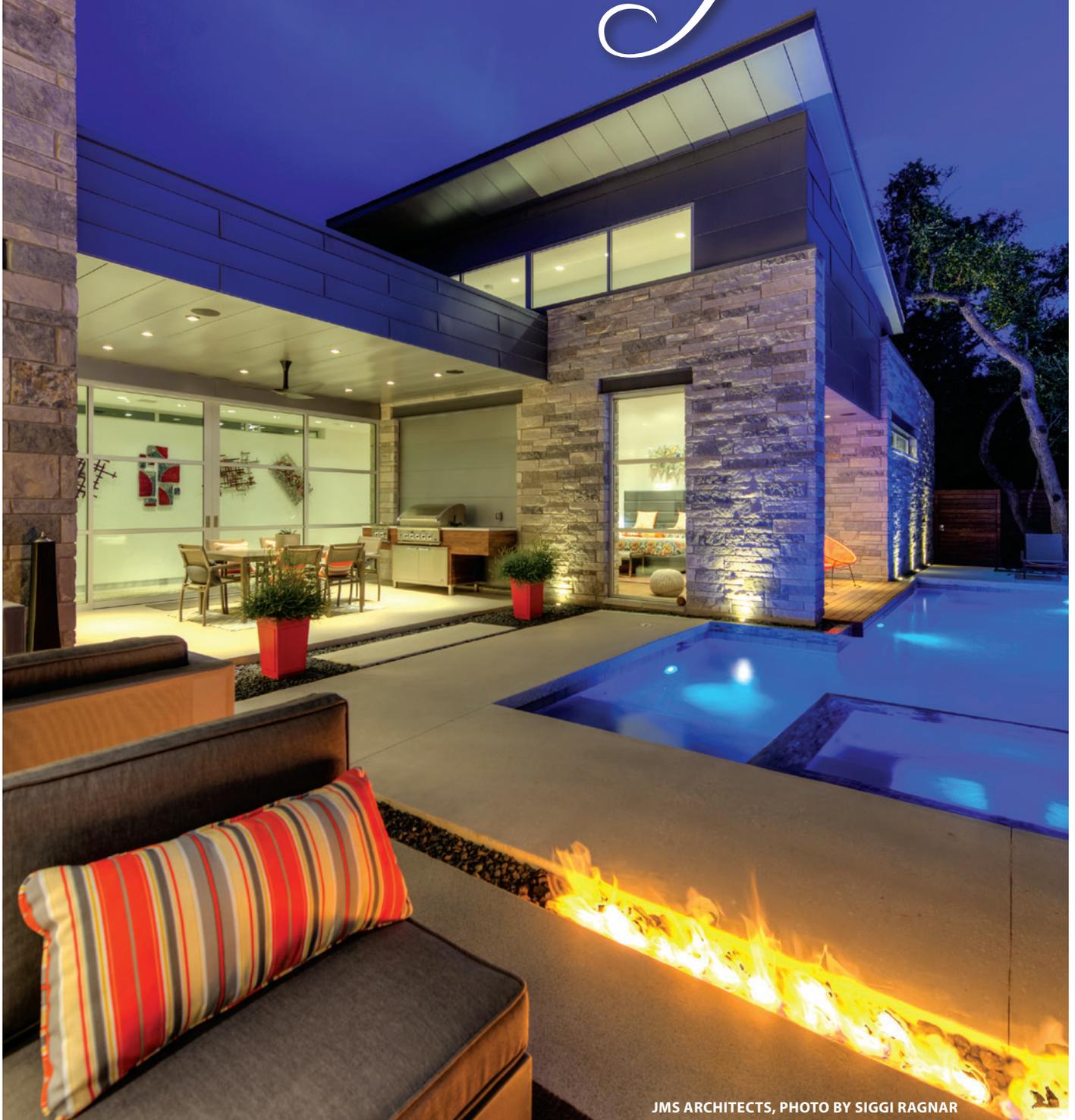


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home design



JMS ARCHITECTS, PHOTO BY SIGGI RAGNAR

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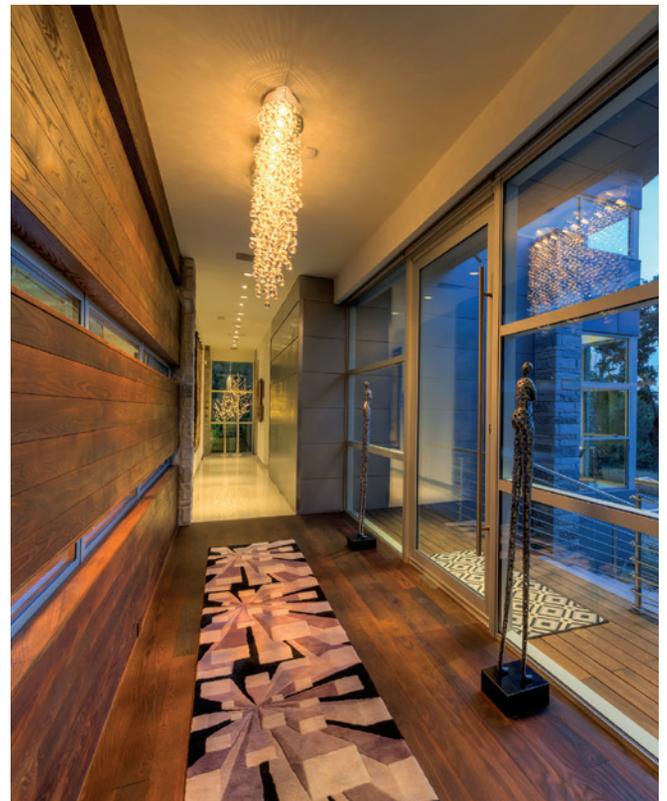




CLEARLY **CONTEMPORARY**

By CHERYL VAN TUYL JIVIDEN | Photography by SIGGI RAGNAR

On an oak-treed, corner lot in the luxury San Antonio neighborhood, Inverness, is a most contemporary home sitting seven feet above the natural grade. The spacious 4,200-square-foot, one-story floorplan with three bedrooms and a study was designed by JMS Architects who also served as the general contractor, providing construction detailing throughout the build.







The firm, known for its refined modern architecture, worked closely with their clients, a professional couple that were active in the project, says JMS principal and architect, Joseph Smith. “They are very passionate about design and we worked well together on the design of the home — to a point that the client carried an early floor-plan/sketch of the home and each time a change was considered he’d revert back to the initial sketch and typically stay with the initial inspiration.”

Functionality was key to the home’s design, Smith adds, “Keeping with the firm’s philosophy of form follows function, the home exterior façades are a product of the homes functions.” From the street, linear stone steps lead to floating concrete steps which rise to a covered front porch with expansive glass accentuating the steel-framed entry. A stone parapet façade is interrupted with metal channels allowing drainage for the low slope roof, while clerestories formed in a lighter met-





al cladding reach to the north with a pronounced roof overhang. A glass entry appears as a floating bridge designating the home's entrance. It's the first of many such glass details. "We were inspired by factory buildings with simple north facing clerestories — the clerestories were introduced to provide natural light into all the living spaces and bedrooms," explains Smith. Wrapped in grey stone walls, the home is punctuated by expansive glass openings and metal clad walls.

A stone wall on the opposite side of the floating entry leads to the main living space which anchors the outdoor courtyard space, a secluded area which was pivotal to the overall design. "As a courtyard design, the focus of the living spaces are inward. The clients requested privacy which the courtyard design affords," says Smith.

At the homeowner's request, there is a rear entry motor court between two single-car garages. Corten® steel was utilized in landscape wall-formed planters and retaining walls which stair step from the house to the street allowing the home to be nestled into the site. A custom Corten® steel linear panel fence encloses the property. One of the planters covers a buried cistern that collects the air conditioning condensate. The north facing clerestories allow for southern exposure to the rooflines accommodating a future solar panel array.

While the exterior is distinctive, the interior living spaces are smartly-styled — a sleekly modern canvas for the homeowner's lifestyle and chic contemporary décor. The homeowner provided the interior design and greatly influenced the landscaping design as well.

The entry connects the main living space to the guest wing. Narrow strip windows set in a wood clad wall opposite the door provide glimpses to the courtyard pool. The guest wing has two bedrooms with ample ambient interior light via clere-





stories. Maximizing privacy, the windows are orientated to the street and side yard.

The main living space is open to the kitchen and dining room with a floating two-sided linear fireplace separating the two. In the center is the living room with a north facing clerestory wall filled with a soaring, capacious ceiling punctuated with a Big Ass® fan. The dining room features a glass pivot door showcasing a climate-controlled wine room. The north side of the space opens to a private courtyard separated from the side alley by a stone garden wall. On the south side, the vast space opens to the pool courtyard with a generous overhang creating a deep outdoor living space.

Continuation of the exterior stone into the main living space ties the exterior to the interior. Glass openings interpose the stone walls with integrated shade pockets providing for sun and privacy considerations.

At the end of the main living space, the Italian Scavolini®

kitchen, designed for an open relationship to the room, is set in stone walls. The rear wing, galley hallway encompasses a wall-to-wall and floor-to-ceiling glass pivot door and pantry, while connecting the master wing and creating the rear face of the pool courtyard. The master bedroom opens to a wood deck which is cantilevered over the pool, while polished concrete decking surrounds the pool and zero-edge spa. A show-stopping, linear fire feature separates the outdoor covered area from the pool decking and adds night time drama for outdoor entertaining.

It's especially at night — when all the glass allows the exposed light and colors to interplay with the outdoor elements — that this contemporary home shines like a jewel box of color and composition. ❖

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RANCHO SAN NOMBRE

RUSTIC AND REFINED

By MAURI ELBEL | Photography by DANIEL NADELBACH

On 600 wooded acres just over an hour outside of Houston in a dot of a town called New Ulm, a rustic ranch house serves as a rural escape for a city-dwelling family.





While weekdays are spent immersed in Houston's busy bustle, weekends for the couple and their two children tick on a bit slower on Rancho Sin Nombre (Spanish for "ranch with no name"), an idyllic rural swath of land with plenty of trees, a few lakes and chickens, donkeys and longhorns. The couple purchased the land two decades ago, but their 4,500-square-foot rustic retreat evolved from years of contemplating exactly what they wanted and needed.

"Their original intention was to just build a pool," says architect Rick Burleson of Burleson Design Group who worked with the clients a few years prior to design a skeet range. "But ultimately, they came to the conclusion that they wanted a house as well. One nice thing about working with clients

who have owned the property for a long time was that they were familiar with the land and had a great idea of how they wanted to use it."

Interested in a ranch home that gravitated toward a more rustic aesthetic, the couple sought out Burleson Design Group which has designed individual residences and large family compounds on ranches all across Texas.

"They wanted a design that was rustic and durable and appropriate to a ranch," says Burleson. "But they were also really interested in designing something that would relate to the existing party barn. They wanted to find the right balance — a facility that felt welcoming, something that was relatable and very open."

Rustic yet refined, the country compound serves as a



weekend retreat for the family of four and their frequent guests, but it was also designed with the future in mind. The design was born out of several objectives: to capture a view of their picturesque lake to the west, orient the structure to the prevailing southeast breezes, and open the outdoor living areas to the existing party barn south of the site to create a communal outdoor living space.

“The overall design sprang from the idea of creating a dominant building in the form of a stone-gabled great room,” says Bursleson. “This is my favorite part of the architecture — it was the starting point of the distinctive design.”

Embodying heavy limestone massing, reclaimed sandblasted wood ceilings and a Hope’s steel frame window system, the transparent room ushers in views of the lake, pool



and pavilion, tying all of the site's primary features together. Designed to capture views from both sides, the indoor spaces connect with the surrounding environment. The lower scale bedroom wings extend from the main gabled building in an "L" shape to define the pool court, while a detached pavilion creating the third leg to form an open-face "U" that surrounds the shared communal outdoor living space, undeniably the heart of the residence.

"When designing for ranches, I have learned that it's im-

portant to position the elements — buildings and walls — in a way that creates defined and protected outdoor areas," says Burlison. "I think this compound has such a comfortable outdoor living area — it's a very enjoyable setting."

The proportion and detailing of the building were driven by ranch-appropriate architecture on the interior as well as the exterior. Reclaimed rustic wood, limestone, metal, lower roofs with shed pitches and stained concrete floors are fluid throughout the design, creating a cohesiveness between the



inside and outside, and a feeling of durability and permanence throughout.

The main three-bedroom home shares a single living area and a media room, designed to accommodate the family when it is just the four of them and provide a timeless configuration that will accommodate the couple once they are empty nesters. The master bedroom is on the opposite side of the house from the pool, providing a view of the lake while buffering the homeowners from pool noise and activity. Three guest



bedrooms are connected to the main house by the roof but separated by a carport element which forms the base of the U-shaped structure. The guest suites, configured similarly to a hotel, each have their own bathrooms for a greater sense of privacy but can also be accessed from the pool deck which creates a shared communal experience once they walk outside.

“They like to entertain their friends and family there a lot,” says Bursleson. “That was a big driver for the design — being able to accommodate large groups.”

The pavilion wrapping the pool features an outdoor kitchen with a large serving bar and sink, grill and pizza oven, a large covered lounge and dining area with a support kitchen equipped with a sink, dishwasher, extra refrigerators and additional prep and storage space, making it as convenient as possible to entertain large groups.

“That support kitchen was an idea they had which I hadn’t seen before,” says Bursleson. “But they had been entertaining for 20 years and knew what was needed.”

Bursleson gives credit to the clients and interior designer Darla Bankston May for collaborating on various interior



details and selections — a collaboration the architect says yielded refined counterpoints to the otherwise rustic architecture. For example, the built-in niches with painted bead board in the great room creates a space for the owners to display some of their keepsakes while providing an elegant contrast to the stone and exposed woods, and the starry night ceiling that twinkles like a Texas sky above the media room adds an appropriate touch of whimsy. Lighting details come into play in several areas throughout the house, from the LED lights embedded under the kitchen island that create a nice yet subtle indirect light source below the reclaimed oak counter island, to the fun exterior sconces featuring colorful marbles embedded into the faces.

“It was a great multi-year collaboration between client and architect to create this centerpiece compound for Rancho Sin Nombre,” says Burleson. “It’s a retreat where the house functions well on an intimate scale when it is just their immediate family, but then it also has this capacity for entertaining large crowds with the pool and pool court and outdoor area and guest rooms.” ❖



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COZY AND COMFORTABLE

By MAURI ELBEL | Photography by BRIAN MIHEALSICK





Sometimes the subtle moments in a home can make the greatest impact. Such is the case with a retired couple's home in West Austin where a minimal palette and cleverly-planned, sunlight-filled spaces combine to create a home that's cozy when it's just the two of them and comfortably accommodating when their entire family is gathered together.

The couple's son, New York-based architect David Fox of Stonefox, worked with Texas Construction Company to design a home that would suit their needs as they relocated from St. Louis to Austin to be nearer to their grandchildren. Other than being closer to help out with their grandchildren and having enough space to accommodate multiple generations of a large family, Royce Flournoy, president of Texas Construction Company, says the couple wanted a home where they would be able to comfortably age in place.

With those objectives in mind, the three-bedroom, three-and-a-half-bathroom house takes a U-shaped form, wrapping three sides of an intimate internal courtyard. The heart of their nearly 4,000-square-foot, single story home — a sprawling space flanked by generous white-trimmed windows that allow natural light to pour in from both sides — is divided into three separate functions: den, formal living and formal dining. Two paneled partitions effectively establish spatial separation without using any doors or walls, allowing for three different functions inside the room while maintaining connection and flow throughout the space.



“It’s a clever use of space that lets the room be very expansive and creates compartmentalized areas for everyday use so it doesn’t seem overly big,” says Flournoy of the partitioned space. “It flows really well when they are entertaining or having family gatherings.”

A bedroom wing extends from one side of the home, encompassing the couple’s master suite and two guest bedrooms, while another wing runs parallel to it, comprising the kitchen, informal dining and living areas, and the garage. From a living perspective, Flournoy says the layout shields the bedrooms



from the rest of the activity going on in the home, which is especially useful when multiple generations are gathered together. But the original concept for the home's unique layout was born out of the site's existing qualities.

"The design came out of the way the lot was laid out," says Flournoy of the flat property with a steep drop in the back. "They wanted a decent back yard, and by using the left and right wings of the home to flank this courtyard, it gave us the imprint to create a retaining wall and provided an economical approach to resolving the steep slope of the backyard."

Throughout the interior and exterior of the transitional home, understated materials, minimalist finishes and clean lines evoke an inviting sense of warmth. On the inside, soothing seafoam and pale gray paint selections create a neutral backdrop to well-edited pops of color like the mustard sofas in the formal living area.

"In general, there is a really clean palette to the house — it is well done and easy to digest," says Flournoy. "It makes for a very welcoming space to be in."

The kitchen's expansive, open floor plan is centered







around a large island featuring shiny quartz countertops and a prep sink, leaving plenty of room for a dining table that provides additional seating during big family meals. Wrapped by custom wood cabinetry, clear birch dove tail drawers and wood-paneled appliances all painted in bright white, the room is graced by ample sunlight and serves as an inviting space to gather and converse. Prefinished oak floors flow throughout the house, with the gray undertones in the wood complementing the wall colors. Single oak planks are sparingly used as ceiling beams, adding a subtle texture that plays well against light, creamy walls and wood floors.

“There are just these little moments in each room,” says Flournoy. “Nothing has a grand statement.”

Similarly, on the exterior, a dark standing seam metal roof provides an appealing contrast to the home’s Lueders limestone façade, a nod to the home’s Hill Country roots. The covered porch, with its flagstone floor and pine ceiling, creates a

contemplative spot to relax and soak in the surrounding scenery. During periods when mosquitos are active — a frequent occurrence in Central Texas — automated screens are utilized for added protection.

The home’s simple design is perfectly suited for all functions of the couple’s life, from babysitting their grandchildren to hosting their grown children and gathering multiple generations of their large family during the holidays.

“They are very active in their children’s and grandchildren’s lives so this home allows them to provide that support,” says Flournoy. “And with provisions for aging in place, they will be comfortable for years to come.” ❖

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EASY ELEGANCE

By JULIE CATALANO | Photography by PAUL FINKEL

When an active family wanted time together but also time apart in their newly remodeled four-bedroom home in Austin, they called on Austin/Minneapolis Interior Designer Martha O'Hara, president and owner of Martha O'Hara Interiors, to make it happen.



O'Hara worked with design director Carrie Ellington on furnishing the home just as the extensive remodel by Tom Krager of Krager General was being wrapped up. "We were working with a wonderful layout," says O'Hara. "We wanted the personality of the home to fit the personality of the family — warm, comfortable, casual but sophisticated, and a freshness that would blend old and new."

The L-shaped layout of the great room, open kitchen and informal dining room make up "the center of the house and the natural gathering spot," says O'Hara. "We wanted furnishings that would hold up to the family's busy lifestyle." The Swaim sofa is covered in a light grey-taupe herringbone fabric. A similar weave on the Baker chairs lends a vibrant citron color to the room, while a sleek cut-velvet oversized ottoman looks the part

in a room that's both refined and comfortable. Triple French doors open to the patio, making indoor-outdoor living easy.

As for the family's "alone" time, the design is a study in contrasts; specifically, a study each for the husband and wife "that reflects their personalities perfectly," says O'Hara. The husband's library is pure masculinity without being overbearing, with casual animal-themed accessories. "A custom long-horn bull art piece was commissioned for the space by Ellen Willis, a local Austin, Texas artist and family friend of the homeowners." The textured woven damask fabric of the draperies provides balance against the high ceilings of the room.

The animal theme continues in the wife's study with a zebra rug and peacock artwork — but that's where the similarities end. Bright pink chairs and the oversized floral print cus-





tom linen draperies offset the dark wood flooring. There's also room for their son to pull up a chair, although he has his own upstairs space to indulge his passion for music and aviation, along with that all-important place to watch television with his friends.

Another design requirement was the blending of traditional and contemporary in a house that O'Hara describes as having "the casual feel of Texas that can also be easily dressed up for more formal entertaining."

The focal point of formality is the dining room ("The homeowner wanted us to think of it as a jewelry box," says O'Hara), but with a fresh, up-to-the-minute look. The table for eight boasts an unexpected grayed finish and comfy upholstered chairs. Underneath is a striking wool and silk Fay + Belle custom rug from Nepal; overhead floats a traditional but cleaned crystal chandelier.

One challenge was the flooring. Although the existing limestone tile that ran throughout was beautiful, the slightly peachy hue didn't always complement the home's furnishings. The solution? "With carefully chosen custom rugs from Fay + Belle, we could pick the exact colors we wanted that stood up to the color of the floor," says O'Hara. For example, the Tibetan wool custom rug in the entry sets the tone for all of the impressive custom Fay + Belle rugs to follow, including the simple herringbone patterned rug in the great room.





The family dog enjoys being the center of attention; greeting guests entering through the spacious front foyer that opens to the great room, kitchen and informal dining room. A cerused oak chest from Schumacher in the entry is “a new piece with a casual finish that ties in well with the homeowner’s more formal brown mohair armless bench,” says O’Hara. The entry also accentuates the openness of the house. “From there you can see straight through into the outdoors and pool area.”

Another must-have was a gender-neutral guest room, once again combining traditional design with a casual influence. The window treatments are cool sheers with an equally cool touch of embroidered hopsack-type circles. “Sheers and burlap. It’s very yin and yang and a good example of casual elegance.”

For the homeowner, the blending of styles was a success. “The house leans more Texas traditional in style, but with a fresh feel and playful sophistication that spoke to our clients’ aesthetic.”

Most of all, the family treasures their solitude without feeling isolated in their customized retreats. “My husband is retired with no need for an office or even a desk, just a comfortable space to read his newspaper and watch the news, away from the fray,” says the homeowner, who needed a more traditional desk-and-computer office for her charity work. “We’re all very happy in our individual spaces and happy when we come together. That’s been the best part.” ❖

DESIGNER Martha O’Hara Interiors
512.222.3201 | Oharainteriors.com

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WIDE OPEN SPACES

By JULIE CATALANO | Photography by JENNIFER SIU-RIVERA

One look at this fabulous San Antonio redo and it's clear that a true kitchen remodel is more than just new appliances and a coat of paint. Taking a kitchen from so-so to spectacular may be one of the biggest investments for a homeowner — but the results are worth it.

“The home was built in the late 1980s, with a half-wall dividing the family room and the kitchen,” says Julie Bradshaw, ASID, RID, owner of Bradshaw Designs in San Antonio. “They were looking for something more open.”

The room was in desperate need of improved traffic flow, adds designer Crystal Romero, RID, who describes the former layout as “awkward. There was a hallway in between the kitchen and family room, a wasted space.”

Craig Scott, president of CROSS, a construction company in San Antonio, explains the process, “We ‘grew’ the kitchen by removing the wall on the right side, pushed back the interior kitchen wall four feet to absorb the hallway, and then recreated the opening into the dining room which really made the project.”

The transformation was stunning. “It brought the traffic flow through the dining room into the kitchen. Most people are scared to remove a load-bearing wall, and those are the most dramatic projects, but if you spend a little more, you are completely redesigning the space instead of just updating it,” says Scott.

Taking out a wall presented a storage challenge. “We had to make sure the homeowners were okay without all of the cabinets that could be there if we didn't have an opening instead of a wall,” says Romero. The “super-organized” homeowner, she adds, “doesn't keep a lot of dry goods, so a huge walk-in pantry wasn't necessary.” A small pantry with a U-Line undercounter beverage refrigerator was sufficient.

The designers also opted to extend the cabinets all the way to the top of the 11-foot ceilings. “We thought long and hard about that,” says Romero, “but in the end we thought, why not? Bigger is better, and it really adds to the drama of the space.” The soaring cabinetry makes use of every inch of wall space — elimi-



nating that two feet or so of “air” between cabinets and ceiling — and are topped off with beautiful crown molding.

A striking custom-made island became the focal point of the new space — a vast improvement over a peninsula that had a tendency to trap people in the room. Drawers provide storage there as well as underneath the counters on the perimeter.

“We are very efficient in our kitchen designs by including a lot of drawer space whenever possible,” says Bradshaw. “Food and dishes come out to you; you don’t have to get down on your hands and knees to dig around to find things.” A combination of 7-, 9- and 12-inch pulls in satin nickel finish were used on the drawers and cabinets.

Large and low walnut-stained barstools, with leather seats and nailhead trim by Hickory Chair Furniture Company, provide comfortable seating. Open lanterns over the island are from Hudson Valley Lighting in polished nickel with a black iron frame, “which are nice in a kitchen because there is no glass to clean,” says Bradshaw.

Taj Mahal Quartzite countertops, fabricated by Delta Granite & Marble, Inc., of San Antonio, are used throughout, with the island top having a double-thickness laminated mitered edge. Muted colors of cream, white and a touch of green make up the natural stone countertops. “The paint colors were derived from that,” says Romero. “True white wouldn’t have worked in here.”

The kitchen was completely rewired “to accommodate today’s standards,” says Scott. “Obviously, electrical needs are far greater than what was required even in the production homes of the 80s, what with recessed lighting, task lighting, appliances, trash compacter, disposal, and in some cases, more than one dishwasher.” Plumbing was moved to accommodate the new location of the sink.

The wide plank oak flooring was a “direct glue-down onto the slab on the job site, stained and varnished in place.” Older baseboards were replaced with taller, custom versions for a more contemporary look. In keeping with the light and airy theme, two windows that overlooked the pool became one large custom picture window by Marvin Windows.

Luxurious kitchen redos “can change the way you live,” says Scott. Instead of a room to visit occasionally, “it becomes an entertainment and gathering center because of its beauty, spaciousness and good flow. We see it all the time with clients. The kitchen becomes the place to be.” ❖



DESIGNER Bradshaw Designs
210.824.1535 | Bradshawdesigns.com

BUILDER CROSS
210.826.7200 | Cross-tx.com



5 ELEMENTS OF A LUXURY HOME

By CELIA M. VRNAK

Photography courtesy of FACTORY BUILDER STORES

Luxury comes in many forms and though it is somewhat subjective, there are a few key elements which define a luxury home by today's standards. Whether you're looking to upgrade your current home or build your dream home, these tips will help you achieve true luxury.

CONVENIENCE IN EVERY ROOM

For-go the full-time butler with convenience built into every room. For example, with a microwave drawer and refrigerator drawer built in to the TV room, you can refill drinks and whip up snacks without having to pause your favorite show. Enjoy fresh barista-style coffee delivered to your bathroom while you're getting ready in the morning with a built-in coffee maker. Or uncork and unwind with a chilled glass of wine in the bathtub from your integrated wine cooler.

Hands-free operation provides another layer of convenience. Many cabinet manufacturers, such as Ultracraft Cabinetry and Plato Woodworks, are offering bump-to-open drawers and doors which automatically open with a light touch. Touch-free water faucets are becoming more popular as well; you can turn them on with a simple swipe below the spout. You can even get a dishwasher or wine cooler with knock or push-to-open doors for a sleek, hardware-free look.

INTEGRATION

Nothing says "luxury" like integration. Think hidden doors. If building a secret tunnel through your home doesn't seem practical, try hidden appliance doors in the kitchen. With custom panels to match your cabinetry, your appliances will look like they were made just for you. This is also a great way to reduce visual clutter or interruptions, especially if you're implementing refrigeration drawers or coolers in other rooms of the home.



Another great integration technique is blending your appliances and cabinets. Pairing sleek black glass or white glass flush-installed appliances with matching acrylic or thermofoil cabinets blends the two together for a cool, modern look.

LATEST TECHNOLOGY

The convenience of wifi and mobile application technology is being integrated into many of today's appliances. In a hurry? Use a phone app and get a coffee started on your built-in coffee machine. Start the oven on your way home or get an alert when preheating has completed. LCD screens on refrigerators allow you to create sharable groceries lists and calendars as well as stream photos and music. Samsung's new Family Hub Refrigerator includes three interior cameras with remote access so you can view what you already have from the store. If you prefer a gadget-free countertop, try charging station drawers, such as those offered by Plato Woodworks, which provide USB ports and outlets so you can re-juice your electronics while you store them.



Take your home's technology up a notch and run your home from your phone with smart home integration like Samsung's SmartThings Hub. The hub manages everything from lights and energy to security and even entertainment by controlling nearly 200 products including light bulbs, switches, outlets, cameras, thermostats and locks. It also works with other devices like Google Home and Amazon Alexa as well as Samsung's wifi-enabled refrigerator, range and washer.

CLEVER STORAGE & ORGANIZATION

Your home doesn't have to be big to be luxurious. Maximizing space and efficiency in a small space can instantly upgrade your home. If you think your walkway or space might be too small for cabinets, consider vertical lift doors which move the cabinet door up rather than out when opened. This not only saves space but enables you to leave the cabinet open for convenient access to contents while



cooking or unloading the dishwasher. And you can add a motorized push-button close feature if the door lifts too high for you to reach.

You can increase your storage space with cabinet organizers which make use of traditional "dead space." If you have an extra three inches of space between your cabinets and the wall or an appliance, fill it with a pull-out storage unit like a peg base which adds 1.22 square feet of storage space by hanging utensils and cookware. It also keeps items in a neat, easy to see fashion rather than jumbled in a drawer. You can also double your drawer space with a tiered utensil rack. Gain even more storage with a blind corner pullout. These hinged, multi-shelf units expand outside of the cabinet for easy access, then fold neatly back into hard-to-reach corners.

CUSTOM COLOR

Last, but not least, add a luxurious touch with custom color options on traditionally standard color elements. Give your kitchen a unique focal point with a custom color range from Bertazzoni. You can get even more detail with custom trim options on a La Cornue range. Or make a truly elegant statement piece with a custom-designed hood from Vent-A-Hood which offers a seemingly endless combination of colors and materials to choose from. You can even glam up cabinets with a pop of custom color on a kitchen island or bathroom vanity and linen cabinet. Manufacturers like Mid Continent Cabinetry will match literally any paint color you choose, giving you limitless options to reflect your taste and lifestyle.



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PERFECTLY CLEAR GLASS DOORS ARE ON TREND

By CHERYL VAN TUYL JIVIDEN

Driven by homeowners' desire for open spaces, natural light and outdoor living, rooms with a view are more and more outfitted with some multiplicity of glass doors. Thanks to technology, consumers have more choices than ever before that combine aesthetic and function.

While large floor-to-ceiling windows are nothing new, glass doors take the idea into an interactive modernity adding expanses of light and space. Stacking doors — when opened, all panels can stack, hiding behind just one — allow maximum access, and make the best of the outdoors year round. Independently moving panels offer one of the greatest flexibilities.

One of the most appealing characteristics is the abundant light available through glass doors. Additionally, the ability to integrate outdoor spaces into home interiors allows easy ac-

cess to the outdoors for entertainment or personal use, and also the enjoyment of fresh air and climate. Sean Miller of Martel Windows and Doors agrees, saying, “Our customers have been requesting large folding, pocketing and stacking door systems due to the ability to get large openings to create indoor/outdoor spaces as well as to capture light in their interior spaces through the walls of glass these door systems provide. They have quickly become the statement piece in a home that every new homeowner or client remodeling their existing home wants.”

Chris Guido, president of Guido Doors, Windows and Millwork, says hot Texas summers should not be a concern for homeowners. “That is often people’s first reaction, but the reality is it only really starts to get hot here in mid/late June to mid/late September. So for most of the other nine months out of the year, South Texas is generally a very mild climate. There are so many days in December, January and February that have high temperature days in the 60s to 80s. Virtually all of October, November, March, April and May are that way. I would argue outside of Southern California, South Texas has an excellent climate for these doors, without the humidity.”

When choosing a door system for your home, the options are almost endless. Wells Mason, Design Manager for the new BMC Design Center in Austin says, “Our sliding door systems and our folding door systems are hugely popular. People are interested in blurring the line between indoors and outdoors, and they can do this with high-performing glass door systems. People like the idea of a massive sliding door that pockets into a wall — or a folding door that accordions open. It’s high theater.”

BMC offers a wide range of manufacturers and styles at their multiple Texas locations, and Mason believes it isn’t just about aesthetics. “The folding doors are efficient compared to other door systems. The hardware is designed for ease of use, security and a lifetime of performance, and the weather seals and glass are energy efficient. Plus, there are lots of great options with our folding door systems, including fiberglass options, aluminum clad options, different wood species and different glass options. We even have several threshold options depending on the individual requirements of the customer.”

Panoramic Doors’ revolutionary Folding Patio Door allows panels to move independently of each other, free from hinges affording more freedom, easier operation and total control of the opening. On a hinged-system, they can be opened in a variety of configurations.

Function is important, but it has to fit the room’s style. Miller says of the many options, there are favorites. “The styles that are most popular are dark colored frames with narrow sightlines so that the most amount of glass is used and there is minimal obstruction of view.” Mike Feeley with Panoramic Doors says there are style and fabrication choices. “We offer finishes in vinyl, a variety of wood choices including luxurious real wood cladding and over 200 paint colors and custom matching for aluminum.”

When closed, glass door products provide climate control without compromising the view or natural light, and many fine manufacturers are Energy Star® rated and/or Green Seal certified to help insure cost savings and energy conservation.

So how do these compare in cost to other glass wall systems? Guido says, “They are generally more expensive because of the size and the hardware needed to make large systems move smoothly. Of course, installation is everything with these systems.”

Slide, fold, stack or pocket — the reason to pick glass doors are perfectly clear and ideal for any home style.

CHRIS GUIDO PROVIDES IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS WHEN BUYING GLASS DOORS:

Easy Movement — Folding doors are heavy, so the rolling system needs to operate smoothly at all times. Flat wheels that absorb deflections running on a flat surface will work better than grooved wheels on rails to ensure free movement regardless of the door position. Always try before you buy!

Strength — Because folding doors need to withstand all sorts of pressures, both when closed and when moving, the panel profiles (vertical “stiles” and horizontal “rails”) that hold the glass in place need to be strong. But you will also want narrow sight lines, which are more aesthetically pleasing. Therefore, look for stile and rail profiles that are thicker in depth but still narrow when viewed front-on — this gives the required stability and robustness while also maximizing the glass area.

Appearance — Aluminum folding doors can be powder coated in a wide variety of colors and textures to suit your particular preferences. If painted white, they give a consistent appearance with PVC windows. Timber gives an added texture and warmth, and with the correct stain or color can provide a contemporary look, but will require regular maintenance.

Weather Resistance — Because folding doors are much larger than ordinary patio doors, they are more susceptible to the effects of wind and rain. While 100pa water resistance is suitable for sheltered spaces, 250pa+ is advisable for doors that are unprotected from the elements. ❖

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Austin: 512.977.7440 | San Antonio: 210.494.8889
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210.344.8321 | Guidolumber.com

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800.609.1596 | Martelwindows.com

PANORAMIC DOORS

512.917.4923 | Panoramicdoors.com

DESIGNS ON JEWELRY

By CHERYL VAN TUYL JIVIDEN

If you're looking for style and beauty, these Texas-based jewelry designers offer some of the most beautiful ways to adorn yourself and garner plenty of admiration. Each has a unique design aesthetic and a variety of styles that might just speak to your own personality or make a splendid gift for someone special.

AUSTIN: SHAESBY SCOTT

Shaesby, 512.453.7671
Shaesby.com



How did you come to be a jewelry designer?

I pursued a fine arts degree with a concentration in Sculpture. After graduating college at Colorado State University, I moved to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. I was inspired by the way jewelry adorned the cultures of South Americans past and present. I began to work on my first collection 15 years ago.

What influences your designs?

The organic forms found in nature, architecture, fine art and experiences from travel, friends and family.

What makes your designs fresh, different, unique or classic?

My passion for creating jewelry is derived from my own journey and experiences. I approach it as an art form, not to be influenced by trends. I am proud that our jewelry is made in our Austin studio by expert craftsman with only the best materials and methods. Our first unique pieces are still as relevant and timeless today as the day they were made.



What is your signature jewelry piece that you always wear?
My wedding band and belt buckle — of my own design.

What's your favorite part of your job?
That it is not a job, but a life's passion. Waking up every day excited about what is on the horizon and what we will create next. I have the best team of people that I consider family.

Where are your pieces available?
Eliza Page, Anna Gray and Neiman Marcus. Online through these fine retailers, others and on my own website.

JODI BROWNSTEIN
Jodi Rae Designs, 773.330.5222
Jodiraedesigns.com



How did you come to be a jewelry designer?

I have been designing, making and selling jewelry since I was 8 years old. My Mom and Grandma used to take me to gem shows a couple times a year — three generations on the hunt for treasures. I started collecting beads and spent hours making jewelry and barrettes out of anything I could get my hands on. I began selling to stores in my neighboring town and throwing jewelry parties for friends and family...and the rest is history. Jodi Rae Designs was born in 2000.

What influences your designs?

My most obvious inspiration is the stones... unique, rare, different. I love the hunt for the most beautiful of Mother Nature's creations. I seek out stones that strike me with a force. It must be beautifully cut, polished and composed. Then I open myself up to what will accentuate its already spectacular beauty, not compete.

What makes your designs fresh, different, unique or classic?

I am told I have a very recognizable style... bold, strong and unique. I use a lot of circular elements stamped with my unique patterns. My stone selections also stand out as I have a very particular eye for composition and balance in my stones, as well as in the way my pieces lay on the body. I love creating opportunities for versatility in my work, so all of my necklaces have adjustable lengths, can be layered up, stacked and worn day or night.

What is your signature jewelry piece that you always wear?
I am almost always wearing my Labradorite Joy Necklace and a big chunky Sunstone Double Stack Ring. And if I am wearing jewelry, it is 99.99% of the time of my creation.

What's your favorite part of your job?
My favorite part of my job is two-fold. First is the act of creation — working with my hands in a very physical and concrete



way, playing with fire, hammers and tools, and experiencing a piece coming together. Second is the love of the connection with my customers. I have a lot of customers that have been collecting my pieces for years.

Where are your pieces available?

Eliza Page in Austin and on my own website.

SAN ANTONIO:

ELIZABETH HERFF

Hazel Smyth, 210.573.6517

Hazelsmyth.com



How did you come to be a jewelry designer?

I've always created things, starting in my teens. In college, I made clay jewelry and for a couple of years after I had children, I designed and produced an evening wear line. But eventually, I decided I needed to create and grow with a business like jewelry because I could start small and (in the early days) do 100% of the production myself. San Antonio's Southwest School of Art taught me all about jewelry construction — casting, mold makings, metal-smithing, etc. This gave me a great start on how to make original, handmade jewelry. Hazel Smyth started in 2004.

What influences your designs?

Travel, art museums, interior design and architecture.

What makes your designs fresh, different, unique or classic?

Each Hazel Smyth style contains a hand-cast piece, made by



me out of wax or clay. Each original piece falls into a collection, and I try to come up with fresh, current, clean-lined, yet classic ideas for each collection. I always try to make something for everyone — big and small pieces, gold

and gemstone pieces, trendy and more classic pieces.

What is your signature jewelry piece that you always wear?

The newest necklace pendant is what I always wear, so right now it's the Medium Klecks Pendant. It is my own design, of course!

What's your favorite part of your job?

I love finding the perfect new idea — clean lines, contemporary,

yet classic — for a new collection and then brainstorming on all the different sizes and shapes I'll need to design to create charms, pendants, hoop earrings, stud earrings, rings, bracelets, (etc!).

Where are your pieces available?

In San Antonio: Baker Tatum, Lee Lee and Meadow; in Dallas: Blue Print and Reveal; in the Hill Country: Camp Verde General Store and Lunamor; and on my own website. I'm also in about 25 other stores in 14 other states across the country, and growing!

CARROLL DORSEY WALKER

Carroll Dorsey Walker, 210.643.0888

Carrolldorseywalker.com



How did you come to be a jewelry designer?

I have always loved being around beautiful things, and gemstones and minerals created from Mother Earth are the most beautiful of all. I can spend days looking at beads. I have been creating jewelry for 18 years now.

What influences your designs?

My goal is to make an impact by combining large gemstones and semi-precious stones in one piece. I don't think dainty is in my category — my style is big, bold and dramatic.

What makes your designs fresh, different, unique or classic?

I design for the woman who is pretty confident with herself. My designs are not tiny... they usually are pretty bold. They are for a woman who wants to be noticed. My clientele



reaches so many age groups, from college girls going through rush, to the gentry set that attends charity balls many times a year, to working women who want to liven up their wardrobe in the boardroom.

What is your signature jewelry piece that you always wear?

My favorite piece of jewelry is a necklace and cross that I made out of the most beautiful Peruvian Opal I have ever seen. It's like looking into the Caribbean Ocean.

What's your favorite part of your job?

My favorite part of my job is hearing about the many compliments from my customers when they wear my jewelry!

Where are your pieces available?

Hanley-Woods in San Antonio, at my home studio and on my own website. ❖



HOTEL WITH HISTORY

By MAURI ELBEL | Photography by JAKE HOLT AND LARS FRAZER

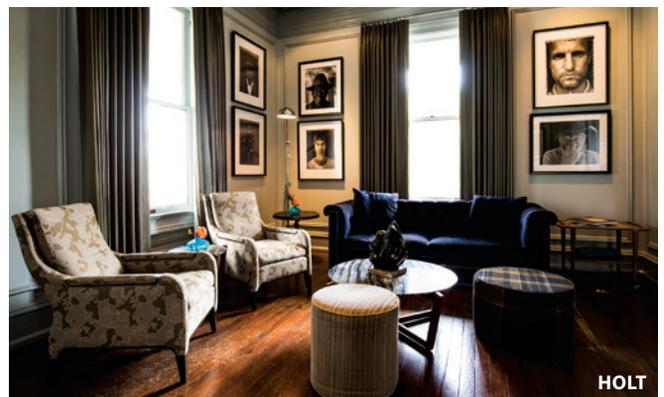
It's no secret Austin is home to an ever-expanding spread of diverse lodging options, but guests who choose to stay at Hotel Ella are resting their heads in a gracefully revamped chapter of history.

In the heart of Central Austin, Hotel Ella is housed in the historic Goodall Wooten House — one of Austin's original landmark estates. Formerly the Mansion at Judge's Hill, the stylish boutique hotel is now found on the National Register of Historic Places thanks to its rich history and ties to The University of Texas. But fast-forward more than a century through its storied past and you'll discover a time-

less property that swirls old world luxury with sophisticated modernism — the result of an extensive renovation in 2013 orchestrated by one of Austin's most influential architecture and interior design firms.

"We love projects like this one on so many levels, from appreciating the roots of a project and its many transformations over its history, to its importance within the neighborhood it exists today," says Michael Hsu, principal of Michael Hsu Office Of Architecture. "To develop a concept of what we wanted to accomplish for this project and a road map for design, we started with an extensive historical research of the project."

In 1878, Thomas Dudley Wooten, one of the university's founders purchased the land on which Hotel Ella now sits, explains Hsu. The Goodall Wooten House, designed by Architect Charles O'Connell, was originally built in 1898 and completed in 1900 when Wooten's son, Goodall, moved into the home with his new wife Ella Newsome who oversaw the home's transformation into the Greek Revival-style mansion that stands today. Known for her impeccable taste, Ella called upon Neiman Marcus to redecorate the entire home in 1925 for \$10,000, which today would equate to roughly one million dollars. For the Greek columns, she turned to the Vanderbilts for a recommendation, eventually choosing the same stone carver who constructed the famous Biltmore Mansion in Asheville.

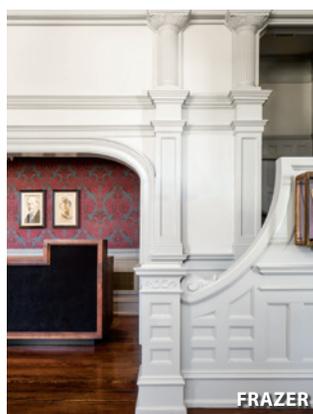


But over the decades, as the house changed owners and functions, the property underwent numerous renovations, explains Hsu. O’Connell supervised an expansion 10 years after the home’s completion, the house underwent notable renovations in the 1940’s when it was sold to Mr. Adams of the Adams Extract Company who leased it to a sorority and again in 1953 when it was sold to The Christian Faith and Life Community. Hsu says the most dramatic changes occurred in 1979 when DeLois Faulkner purchased the house and converted it into a substance abuse treatment center which resulted in the construction of a north wing and a freestanding L-shaped building that borders the courtyard. Further additions came in 2005 when the property was converted into the Mansion at Judge’s Hill.

As the architect and interior designer, Michael Hsu Office Of Architecture renovated and restored the original Goodall Wooten Mansion exterior and updated all of the interior spaces, transforming the historic property into a timeless escape in the form of 47 lavishly-appointed guest rooms featuring

ing an oversized traditional pattern with two framed black and white portraits of Goodall and Ella Wooten, forming a backdrop to a reception desk designed to fit within the newly renovated vestibule and grand stair. Inside Ella Parlor Bar, rich slate grays and a black marble bar countertop with an exaggerated waterfall edge and brass inlays give nod to existing historic detailing of original elements like the fireplace where Goodall’s blunderbuss still hangs above. A custom built-in lounge banquette relies on traditional tufting techniques, but Colombo says they played up the shape of the piece to respond to the curves of the room while emphasizing the tactile feel with the fabric selection — mohair — to add a lightness and delicacy. Lighter colors and finishes brighten interior spaces and balance the natural light in the guest rooms to create a soothing feel.

Previously disjointed, the leveled courtyard now unifies the existing complex of buildings, creating a relaxing space with the addition of a cabana-lined lap pool, a lush living green wall and individual courtyards bordering ground-level suites. Grac-



custom-designed furniture, a cabana-lined lap pool, a wrap-around veranda ideal for sipping signature cocktails from Ella Parlor Bar, Goodall’s Kitchen, a causal American bistro and stylish grounds speckled with a diverse collection of art.

Maintaining the historical integrity of the existing mansion while modernizing its look and feel, the firm’s crisp, clean-lined updates blend in flawlessly with original details. Hotel Ella represents a respectful renovation that gave the historical Greek Revival mansion a new life without covering up its past.

“It is challenging to strike a good balance between what is old and what is new,” says Jay Colombo, partner at Michael Hsu Office Of Architecture. “Yet what we attempt to do is create a harmony between those elements so neither is diminished or detracted from. So through combining more traditional materials and techniques like marble surfaces, brass elements, wood moldings and wainscots detailing, we bridge the design gap between old and new without simply just replicating what existed.”

Walking into the expanded entry foyer, the eyes are immediately drawn to the custom cranberry-colored wallpaper featur-

ing the grounds is a diverse collection of artwork carefully curated by Will Meredith with the history of the property in mind but with a nod to the contemporary, says Colombo of the mixture of historic black and white photos, works from contemporary artists and an exclusive collection of iconic sculptures by Charles Umlauf and Barbara Segal.

While Hsu says his firm isn’t technically known as preservationist architects, the well-known Austin architect says they truly enjoy projects like this one.

“They pose a unique challenge for us in thoughtfully removing the renovated/altered elements over time to reveal the dignity and grandeur of the original home — and then to strike a balance with the new design features that we want to add to the historic narrative of the project that help amplify the original details,” Hsu says. “The original home was beautiful, and it is sometimes very hard as an architect to just selflessly expose what existed and just step back and not over design a project.” ❖

MICHAEL HSU OFFICE OF ARCHITECTURE
512.706.4303 | Hsuoffice.com

OYSTERS: HEAVEN ON A HALF SHELL

By CLAUDIA ALARCON

Photography by CLAUDIA ALARCON

Have you ever wondered who the first person was to eat an oyster? While this question will likely remain unanswered, archeological evidence of oyster middens — piles of discarded shells — found worldwide shows that oyster consumption dates back to prehistory. Oysters were a crucial food source in coastal areas since the dawn of man, and oyster fisheries became an important industry in places where they were plentiful.

The largest oyster-producing body of water in the United States is Chesapeake Bay, and Willapa Bay in Washington produces more oysters than any other estuary in the US. Other important oyster farming areas in North America include the bays and estuaries along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico and the rocky shores of the West Coast.

Oysters have complex flavors that depend on the variety and region, from salty, briny, buttery and mineral, to almost sweet and fruity. Although there are over a hundred varieties, all belong to only five species: Pacific (or Japanese), Kumamoto, European Flat, Atlantic and Olympia. Aside from the environment in which they grow, they differ from each other by the shape of their shells. The European Flat has a large, straight shell with fine ridges, while the Atlantic species is teardrop-shaped. Pacific oysters are smaller and wavy. Kumamotos are also small, with a round and pale shell similar to the Olympias, although these have a smoother shell with a bit of iridescent coloring. Popular North American varieties include Yaquina Bay from Oregon; Duxbury and Wellfleet from Cape Cod; Malpeque from Prince Edward Island; Blue Point from Long Island; Pemaquid from Maine; and Cape May from New Jersey.

Oysters' reputation as an aphrodisiac is not altogether a myth — researchers have found they are rich in amino acids that trigger increased levels of sex hormones, and their high zinc content aids the production of testosterone.



SILO, COURTESY OF SILO

They are also an excellent source of iron, calcium and selenium, as well as vitamin A, vitamin B12 and protein. Another popular belief is that oysters are only safe to eat in months that contain the letter 'r' in their names. This is based in truth, since oysters are more likely to spoil in our warmer months. But another reason is that oysters spawn in the summer, which causes a weak, watery flavor. During the winter months, when the water is nice and cold, these bivalves are at their best.

Home cooks in our area wishing to purchase fresh oysters should look to Groomer's Seafood in San Antonio, a family-owned purveyor selling wholesale, retail and now shipping directly to people's homes from their new online store. When it comes to oysters, Groomer's specializes in Gulf Coast and East Coast (due to environmental concerns, selling West Coast oysters in Texas is illegal.) "Our favorites are the oysters from the Gulf," says Plant Manager Robert Kelly. "They have a sweet, clean taste which is great for a variety of uses. We also sell a kind of Gulf oysters called "Blue Band" which are washed by a high pressure process that ensures cleanliness and makes them easier to shuck as the system separates the shell somewhat. This process eliminates food borne pathogens, and extends the shelf life as well."

Today, overfishing and distress from diseases and pollution have sharply reduced oyster supplies, but efforts from dedicated farmers have yielded new and improved methods for growing them sustainably. "Sustainability is important

to us in the realest sense,” says Kelly. “We source our oysters from farmers and processors along the coast that stem from lifelong relationships. My family had a shrimp and oyster business down in Rockport, which has been sold now, but is a registered historical site thanks to all the history of processing and relationships that occurred there. The seafood business is based on relationships and trust, and with Groomer’s Seafood going back 100 or more years, we have a lot of those great relationships. Taking care of the environment where our products grow and thrive is what will [let us] provide these products in the future. Sustainability will keep our business, along with that of who we source from, successful for years to come. Our business must be treated with respect, and with the mind set of sustainability, to keep the great treasures from the sea in stores and on your table.”

Oysters are a versatile food that can be eaten raw on the half shell, grilled, smoked, boiled, baked, fried, roasted, stewed, canned, pickled, steamed or broiled. Purists prefer them raw, with nothing other than fresh lemon juice or a dab of spicy cocktail sauce, but some chefs chose to enhance them with mignonette, a vinegar-based sauce flavored with fresh shallots and peppercorns, with additional ingredients depending on the chef’s inspiration.

San Antonio’s SILO Terrace Oyster Bar features at least nine types of raw East Coast oysters daily, available individually or by the half-dozen in both the dining room and at the oyster bar on the ample covered terrace. Here, they are served accompanied by the classic cocktail sauce, lemons, mignonette, fresh grated horseradish and Saltines. If you want to try a variety, visit during happy hour for half-price oysters from 4 to 7pm daily and build your own “flight.” SILO also prides itself on their signature chicken fried oysters, served atop sautéed spinach with crispy chunks of braised pork belly, cubes of tart apple and mustard Hollandaise to tie the ingredients together. Chef Gary Boatman also grills them Rockefeller-style with fennel cream, garlic bread crumbs, Parmesan cheese and applewood smoked bacon. The flavor

of fennel marries perfectly with oysters, and anise-flavored liqueurs like absinthe are often used in oyster recipes as well.

Celebrated Austin chef Jack Gilmore has been eating oysters since he was five years old, growing up in the Texas coast near South Padre Island and Brownsville. “I learned [to eat them] the traditional way — Saltines, ketchup and lime. I liked the texture of the oysters with crackers. But by my teens I realized I didn’t need them, and it was best to eat the oysters by themselves. In the 1980s I discovered East Coast oysters and fell in love. They are harder to shuck, but have more flavor and

salinity than Gulf oysters.” At his new restaurant Salt Traders Coastal Cooking in Round Rock, he serves both Gulf and seasonal cold water oysters on the half shell accompanied by mignonette, cocktail sauce, fresh horseradish and house-made bull red sauce.

“I prefer Gulf oysters the majority of the time, but if they are too big, I go for the cold water ones. They are sweeter and brinier.” Gilmore has two favorite ways to eat oysters: “One is to shuck and slurp — keep it simple. When cooking, I like to fry them crispy with masa and eat them with a nice tartar sauce.” At Salt Traders, he serves these inside lettuce wraps with a crunchy fennel slaw. Chef’s creativity also comes into play with a variety of toppings for their succulent oak-grilled oysters.

No matter how you shuck them, oysters are a healthy,

delicious and versatile food. Whether at home or at your favorite seafood spot, now is the time to enjoy them at the peak of the season. Consider oysters and Champagne to grace your holiday table this year. ❖

GROOMER’S SEAFOOD

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SILO TERRACE OYSTER BAR

210.698.2002 | Siloelevatedcuisine.com

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MASTER SUITES LEAD WITH LUXURY

In a recent study conducted by the National Association of Realtors®, the master suite remodeling project — which includes a larger master bedroom, built-in closets and ensuite bathroom — adds overall value to a home but the biggest impact is consumer joy which rated a whopping 9.7 (out of 10) from a satisfaction and happiness perspective.

Key areas to consider: Bathroom, Closet, Privacy and Workout Space.

- Design a larger shower to ensure there is enough space for more than one person. Manufacturers offer solutions for surround showers with multiple wall and ceiling mounted faucets and body sprays. Waterproof controls and speakers guarantee you'll always have access to your favorite playlist.

- The finishes you choose also determine the level of luxury. Use of natural stone for tile, flooring and countertops can add to the overall feeling. Lighting fixtures also impact the ambiance — chandeliers or pendant lighting can provide various lighting levels and design styles.

- A double sink vanity and separate grooming areas are must-haves. The tech savvy homeowner can also have a flat-screen TV installed in the mirror. When the TV is turned off, the mirror appears normal. Other trends include ways to hide cords and prevent tangled wires for grooming products.

- A standard size walk-in-closet is 7 by 10 feet for a single person or 10 by 10 feet to share. Include built-in shelves, drawers and shoe racks, and consider full-length mirrors and a small chair or ottoman. Pamper feet with padded carpeting or throw rugs that delight visually and provide comfort. Other luxury items include motion activated lights (when opening a closet or cabinet door), wireless remotes and lighting under shelves. Battery-operated light options eliminate additional electrical outlets or cable/cord management.

- Incorporating a specialty space for working out is the ultimate luxury. Wall-to-wall mirrors, a wall-mounted TV and surround sound can envelop you in calm and peace or provide the energy and excitement to run the extra mile.

The master bedroom is the first and last thing you see every day. Create a luxury experience that satisfies all your senses. ❖

To find a professional remodeler in Austin or San Antonio, visit Austinnari.org or Remodelsanantonio.org.



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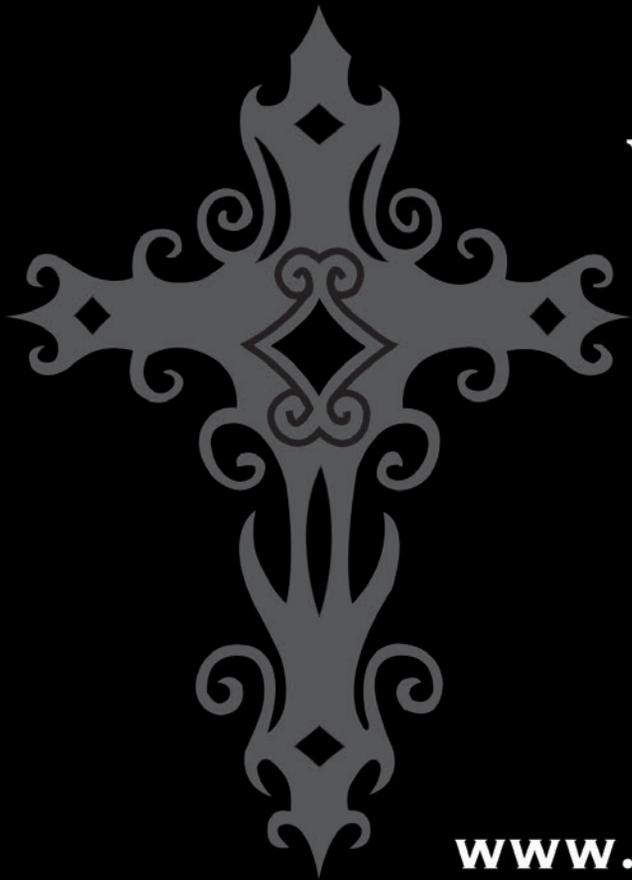
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HOT SPOTS

By JULIE CATALANO



STEEPING ROOM

Ahh, tea. In Texas, it usually means iced in a glass and the epitome of casual. But as cooler weather descends and the post-holiday frazzle demands a touch of self-indulgence, picture this: the civilized ritual of warm, aromatic elixirs poured from a steaming teapot and enjoyed with luscious sweets and savories. January is National Hot Tea month, and Texas has plenty of places to cozy up with a cuppa. These four hit the spot.



FOUR SEASONS HOTEL, AUSTIN

512.478.4500 | Fourseasons.com/austin.

Photography courtesy of Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts

The Four Seasons has always been associated with luxury, and their tea experience in downtown Austin is no exception. Available from Thursday through Sunday, reservations are required for what beverage manager Aneeesh Sharma calls “an amazing tea experience. We sit right on Lady Bird Lake, with beautiful views, at an elegantly set table in a

serene, quiet, mellow ambience.” After you’ve ordered from 12 different teas, the chef begins creating the traditional tea sandwich menu of Chicken Waldorf, egg salad, cucumber and brie — or any variation in order to take dietary restrictions into account — and warming up the melt-in-your-mouth scones, accompanied by unlimited tea, or upgrade to a champagne tea. Tables accommodate groups of eight, and larger groups are split up into tables of four. But solo sippers are a common sight, too. “We have quite a few individuals who enjoy the experience alone, and we see more people substituting afternoon tea for lunch.” Other regulars are parents who want to introduce their children to the mannered niceties of the tea tradition. Upcoming renovations will make the experience even more spectacular. “We have five Juliet balconies that are going to be combined into one giant balcony over the lake,” says Sharma. “Imagine having tea out on the lake year round, in a climate-controlled room and enjoying the view.”

THE STEEPING ROOM, AUSTIN

512.97.STEEP (The Domain),

512.46.SCONE (North Lamar)

Thesteepingroom.com

It’s like a trip around the world without leaving Austin. The two locations of The



Steeping Room in the capital city offer tea services that read a bit like an itinerary. “Our whole menu is inspired by the countries where we purchase tea,” says Amy March, co-owner and founder, who had just returned from China and Japan, “We’re inspired by major tea drinking cultures around the world.” The traditional Century Oaks offering consists of tea sandwiches, a choice of scones, tea cake of the day, clotted cream and spreads. The exotic Kasbah Express has a Middle Eastern flair with a variety of fresh fruits drizzled with rosewater infused honey, roasted garlic hummus, sheep’s milk feta, mint flatbread and cookies. For pure Zen try the napa rolls, edamame and matcha dusted brownie. All come with a pot of premium tea, mug of chai or a tea-tail (tea-based cocktail). There’s a full breakfast, lunch, dinner and Sunday brunch menu — vegan and gluten free options abound — and tea services are available anytime, including to go. Teas can be bought online, choosing from black, green, white, oolong, pu-erh, tisane and decaf. A customer fave is Beautiful Coconut green tea, says March. “It just flies off the walls.”

JINGU HOUSE CAFÉ, SAN ANTONIO

210.73.JINGU | Jinguhousesa.com



The Japanese Tea Garden in historic Brackenridge Park is one of San Antonio’s most beloved landmarks. With its exotic waterfall, lily pond, winding stone paths, arched bridg-

es and lush foliage, it makes a picture-perfect backdrop for the Jingu House Cafe. Named for the original Japanese family who



lived there as caretakers of the gardens from 1926 until 1942, when WWII forced them out, the house was restored as part of a collaboration between the San Antonio Parks Foundation and the city. The full lunch menu features Asian style bento boxes, sandwiches, stir fry, salads, wraps, and green tea cookies and cake. The star of the tea menu is Blooming Tea, presented in a glass pot for the full visual effect. “It’s our own special blend,” says Japanese Tea Gardens venue manager Espie Robertson. “It has this natural sweetness with a beautiful aroma and presentation.” The more than 25 tea selections are ever changing, says Robertson, and “every day we brew one herbal, one green and one black.” Take-home teas are sold by the ounce and can be mail ordered by calling the cafe. The hilltop location is immensely popular as a wedding and special event venue for up to 300, with exclusive catering by Fresh Horizons who will provide light lunches, hors d’oeuvres and of course, tea parties. Summer and winter hours vary, so it’s best to call ahead.

MADHATTERS TEA HOUSE AND CAFE, SAN ANTONIO

210.212.4832 | Madhatterstea.com

Old timers remember this San Antonio institution’s former location near the Witte Museum. Now it’s hard to imagine Southtown without this popular cafe, its quirky interior punctuated by brightly painted tables, whimsical artwork of Alice and her friends in Wonderland, and slightly off-kilter doorways and shelves. In true Lewis Carroll style, the place looks small at first, but seems to get bigger with every adjoining room and three very dog-friendly patio areas. When ordering tea, patrons choose their own from a collection of mismatched cups and mugs. Tea selections include black, green, red, white, herbal and oolong, with certified kosher, organic, gluten free, fair trade and non-GMO options. The full menu features soups, salads, desserts and best-selling breakfast fare along with a Saturday and Sunday brunch. A tea for two service is offered daily: afternoon tea serves up two types of sandwiches, two scones and petit fours; high tea adds a third sandwich with one scone and petit fours. The eclectic atmosphere is good for people watching, reading, studying or a spot of tea with friends or business associates. Or book a bridal or baby shower for the full tea party experience. Through the years, Madhatters has earned nods from the New York Times, National Geographic Traveler and Rachael Ray. Bonus: walk off those pastries on the nearby downtown River Walk. ❖

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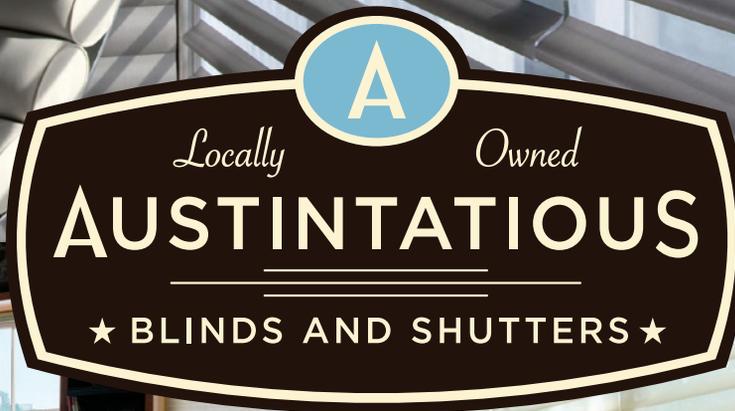
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