

A COLLECTOR'S HEAVEN

By DANA W. TODD | Photography by PAUL FINKEL

As avid collectors of several genres of books, musical CDs, instruments, movie DVDs and figurines, Karl and Lisa Pallmeyer simply had run out of room to hold their finds in their 1962 ranch-style home.



With its modest square footage reminiscent of the way families lived 50 years ago, the couple had maximized every available nook and cranny for their thousands of collectible items. Many items were still in boxes, with no opportunity to move onto display shelves in the house and insufficient access for viewing.

Most people would simply look for a bigger house and move out. But letting go of the things they love is not the modus operandi in the Pallmeyer household. Instead, the couple contacted CG&S Design-Build, a home renovation firm in Austin, to reconfigure the house they had owned since 1994 and enlarge its footprint. Why did they decide to stay? Karl says home prices skyrocketed immediately after their home's purchase in 1994,

doubling the price tag of neighbors' home purchases and making it unaffordable to move. "We love Austin and we love our neighborhood, which is within walking distance of our favorite restaurant," Karl Pallmeyer says. "We would have to move too far north or south of Austin to get a comparable home." "We don't often see this level of investment in this type of neighborhood," says CG&S Design-Build's principal architect,



Stewart Davis. “These homeowners didn’t let the market sway them; they did exactly what they wanted to do.”

And what Karl Pallmeyer always wanted was a library in his home. Along with his wife, Lisa, a voracious reader, their book collection rivals the local library, providing the justification to satisfy this lifelong desire.

CG&S Design-Build drew up plans that almost tripled the house’s size, nearly reaching the city’s maximum legal limit for house renovation and construction projects for the existing lot size. Enlarging the ranch house from its original 1,048 square feet on one level to more than 2,800 square feet on two levels enabled the homeowners to stay in the house they loved while gaining the additional storage necessary to appropriately display their extensive collections.

“The size of their collection is unique, and it is in pristine shape,” says Davis. “We were able to give the Pallmeyers access to their collection and at the same time use it as a design element. There is storage and display along every wall and in every nook in the house’s public spaces.”

The design and construction team reworked the garage into usable heated and cooled space, adding a 775-square-foot media room where it had been located. Sliding three-level-deep vertical shelves in floor-to-ceiling beech cabinetry store more DVDs and CDs than would typically be possible in this footprint. A rack built into an island bar holds a wine collection. Metal shelf hangers and granite on the bar provide polish and shine in the room.

The nearby library and central atrium hallway showcase

floor-to-ceiling custom shelves, whose top shelves the couple access with classic rolling wooden library ladders. A home office provides more space with bookshelves surrounding the doorway. Red oak floors in the library and other main floor rooms and replicated black-and-white checked tile floors in the atrium work together in this eclectically styled house. In fact, mixed materials throughout the home — wood, metal, glass and stone — reflect the homeowners’ distinct personal style and contribute to the “living with what they love” aesthetic.

“The house has a definite bookstore vibe,” Davis says. “It is a playful, eclectic collection.”

Every room contains some type of decorative storage and display built-ins with the exception of the dining room and guest bedroom. Even the stairwell furnishes an opportunity

to display artwork and sculptures in wall niches and through a peek-a-boo divider wall.

Besides the storage the couple gained to display their collections, they multiplied the house’s usefulness for their lifestyle through the addition of a craft room for Lisa’s work and a music room with hanging storage for Karl’s guitar collection.

Even the “unglamorous” parts of the house received an overhaul. Renovators swapped in a tankless water heater for the old water heater model and added better insulation and a good mechanical system.

Outside, the CG&S Design-Build team ensured materials are durable, mixing metal, concrete, glass, wood and fiber cement siding to add the appeal fitting today’s standards. No longer just



a modest ranch house, the new materials upgrade the exterior into a more modern profile.

Both cypress and fiber cement siding mix effortlessly. A second floor walkout balcony mixes in metal elements. New aluminum windows and a new front door provide a shot of curb appeal.

To both upgrade the exterior and solve the problem of the sloping backyard, Davis designed a back deck with a 10-foot roof overhang cantilevered above it, supported with large steel beams and strong laminated veneer lumber (LVL). Concrete walls and metal railings help extend the deck over the backyard, where the team introduced retaining walls to terrace the sloped backyard and make it more usable and enjoyable.

The long roof overhangs help with utility bills and allow for

a zero reveal of the windows, a modern detail that provides an open feeling. With zero reveal windows, the window meets the ceiling with no apparent supporting structure, making the ceilings appear continuous to the outside and allowing the roof to “float.” Modern details such as this one help the ranch house morph into a home that appreciates the past but is moving into today’s design standards.

“Others would have torn down the house and started over,” says Davis, “but this family likes older houses and considers itself a steward over this one.” ❖

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