



# WHY THIS SPACE WORKS

By MAURI ELBEL | Photography by TRE DUNHAM

## Designer Spotlight: Stephanie Villavicencio of Bella Villa Design Studio

SITTING ON MUSIC LEGEND WILLIE NELSON'S PICTURESQUE 688-ACRE LUCK RANCH IN SPICEWOOD, THIS STUNNING TIERRA VISTA HOME BOASTS HILLTOP VIEWS FROM THE OUTSIDE AND CAPTURES HILL COUNTRY WARMTH ON THE INSIDE. RECENTLY COMPLETED THIS PAST SPRING, THIS JENKINS CUSTOM HOMES DESIGN/BUILD PROJECT WAS ONE OF FIVE HOMES FEATURED IN THE GREATER AUSTIN'S HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION'S PARADE OF HOMES EARLIER THIS YEAR. BELLA VILLA DESIGN STUDIO OWNER STEPHANIE VILLAVICENCIO TALKS US THROUGH THE DESIGN OF THIS HOME'S INVITING AND COMFORTABLE GREAT ROOM, WHICH MAKES EVERYONE WHO ENTERS IT FEEL WELCOME.



### What did your clients want out of this great room?

**SV:** This is a single family with two teenage daughters, and when you walk in, you are immediately greeted by this entry/great room with a fantastic view. The house was designed to have the master suite on one side with the girls' bedroom and game room loft upstairs on the opposite side of the home. This great room is the heart of the home, and the clients really wanted a cozy spot for conversations. They purposefully didn't want a television in this room, as they already have a media room and a game room upstairs. They wanted a quiet space without the distractions of television.

### Why did your design team decide to place four chairs in the center of the room rather than going with the more traditional sofa and chairs layout?

**SV:** The space is more open and better for conversation with four chairs. It is inviting and comfortable and you are not blocked by a big sofa or sectional. As you can see, this room is open to all sides. You have the pocket doors that go into the outdoor porch — when the weather is nice, you can open these doors which allows the entire area to act as one large entertaining space. On the left, a big arch leads into kitchen. On the right, a shelf-lined hallway leads to the master bedroom, and one of the shelves is a hidden door which can be pushed open to allow you to walk down the steps into a wine room featuring more than 200 bottles of wine.

### As you were conceptualizing this space, what most inspired you?

**SV:** The view. It's very nice looking out these windows from the top of the hill which is exactly why we proposed the four-chair option for them. This is not a huge room so we didn't want to block the traffic pattern through the house or the beautiful views by using a large sofa. And they liked the mix of natural and industrial elements without going too modern.

### This great room is bound by rustic finishes — from the beams and stonework down to the fireplace and flooring. What were some of the more masculine materials used in here?

**SV:** The stone arch is repeated from the home's exterior — a Texas Chopped Blend. The flooring is a brushed and chiseled travertine that is very warm in color. The fireplace and the mantle are travertine as well — and the same material is also featured around the cooktop in the kitchen. The wooden cross beams and shelving are both stained in a warm brown tone to match each other.

### What interior choices helped to create coziness in this space?

**SV:** We kept a pretty neutral palette in here so that we could bring in colors with accessories and artwork. The clients really liked the warmth in the color of the flooring. It was important



the outdoor furniture is from Outside In Style. We brought in color with items like the abstract painting from Maria Martin Art and several pieces on the shelves are from Wimberley Glassworks.

**What are some of your favorite elements featured in this space?**

**SV:** I love the rug and the arch that forms an entry way to the kitchen — I think those two elements really tie this room together. The artwork was one of my favorite features in this room because it added a modern flair. Accessorizing the shelves instantly added ambiance and turned this house into a home.

**When designing central gathering spaces such as this, do you have a certain philosophy you generally follow?**

**SV:** We always try to think of how people are going to use any particular space. In this room we pictured people living here, walking outside, going into the kitchen. By always keeping the client's lifestyle in mind, we try to make the space as usable and comfortable as possible.

**You mentioned your team designed this home while the homeowners were living overseas. Was this a challenging process?**

**SV:** Since they were overseas during the design, everything was done remotely other than meeting with them in person a few times. It's not really a challenge because we work with many clients who do not live here during the building process. When we first meet with clients, we try to get a good read on them to find out their goals for their home, how they live and how they want to use the space, and we factor all of that in as we are designing the space. We communicated throughout the process to make sure we were going in the right direction. They put a great deal of trust in us because of that. We really try to listen to what our clients want, and at a certain point, they trust us to do what we think looks best.

**Once the clients saw this space in person for the first time, how did they react?**

**SV:** They loved it. When she first saw it, she was very moved. She was so overcome with joy and couldn't stop walking around and taking pictures. Her husband wasn't with her so she FaceTimed with him so they could share the experience.

**As a designer, why does this space work?**

**SV:** We were really pleased with the way this turned out. This house was the third house on the tour, but when people walked into the great room, they would stand still and say "wow." They said they could really picture themselves in this house. It's welcoming and comfortable from the first time you enter. And the view is awesome. The entire home was built around the site, and this room was intended to take advantage of the view at every opportunity. Standing in here, you just feel like you are at home and that is what everyone said when they walked in. ❖

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to them that this room be inviting. The rug, from Bijan Rugs, is beautiful. The taupe colors bring in some of the same colors seen in the arch made from the exterior stone. Plus we liked that it provided a little bit of pattern but was faded so it looked like it was old, weathered and worn. The tufted wing bank chairs and crank coffee table made with reclaimed wood are perfect for the center of the room. People really loved the entry table with the wavy natural edge and the settee as you walk in. Most of the indoor furniture is from World Interiors and