



LAKESIDE LIVING

By MAURI ELBEL | Photography by DROR BALDINGER

When a retiring couple decided to relocate from Alaska to the sun-drenched capital of Texas, they couldn't have picked a better spot to settle down than the serene shores of Lake Austin.

After interviewing several firms, LaRue Architects was given the task of designing their waterfront home where they looked forward to enjoying a leisurely lifestyle upon retirement.

Spanning the length of their lakefront lot, the couple's spectacular one-story home sits back from the water's edge nestled beneath towering pecan trees. From their backyard, the homeowners and their guests enjoy front-row seats on Lake Austin whether they're lounging around the pool bordering the back of their home or gazing out from the generous windows that bring the outdoors inside.



From the street, the contemporary Hill Country home's front elevation remains unassuming. Clad in stucco and smooth cut regional limestone, solid facades with several punched out windows meet the eye upon first glance. The real experience begins as guests pass through the entry gate and courtyard and into the home which reveals dazzling lake views through its expansive use of glass.

"Once inside the main house, there are views of the lake from nearly every room," says James LaRue, principal of LaRue Architects who worked alongside project manager Emily Marks Haydon on the project. "The home has a very open feel — the

homeowners enjoy entertaining and this floor plan allows them to do so."

In just about every room in the house, there's an experiential quality that connects the viewer to his or her surroundings, explains LaRue. "In the house, you really feel like you are a part of the lake activity."

Built by Matt Sitra Custom Homes, the 4,300-square-foot (7,500 square feet of covered area), 4-bedroom, 4.5-bathroom home is an ideal space for a couple who enjoys entertaining family and friends. Adding to the home's entertaining allure are additional features like the screened porch comprised of regional

limestone, wood siding and screen mesh; the inviting pool perched above the lake; and the detached guest house situated near the front entrance for convenient come-and-go access.

Unarguably the most impressive architectural feature of the home is its central core, encapsulated in a slanted "glass tube," featuring floor-to-ceiling windows throughout the living and dining spaces. Lake views pour in from one end of the glass tube while the other overlooks the entry courtyard.

During the design process, LaRue transformed perceived challenges including site limitations from large existing trees and western sunlight into opportunities. While positioning the home

to capture lake views remained top priority, the orientation of the home resulted in capturing harsh sun during certain times of the day, which was mitigated with a large cantilevered roof extending over the glass tube to add protection.

Taking advantage of the technology on offer, the homeowners opted to install solar panels on two areas of their roof to help make their home more energy efficient.

"The slope of the metal roof is optimally oriented for the placement of the panels," says LaRue.

Since the elevation of the lake is lower than the finished floor elevation of the house — combined with the fact that there aren't



any homes on the opposite side of the lake — the property features prime views of the bluff across the water. In fact, looking out from the home, the closest two structures to the lake are part of the homeowners' property: the screened porch, an ideal spot to watch sports or chat with friends, and the boat dock, which mimics the design of the main home by utilizing the same materials.

Open spaces and clean lines define the home's interior curated by Paula Ables, whose successful collaboration with LaRue Architects yielded a look that stays true to the architecture and remains harmonious to the original concept. Throughout the home, Ables' well-edited blend of furnishings, colors and textures marries contemporary style with comfortable livability.

"One of the things the clients told me from the beginning is that they wanted a place that whenever people walked in, they never wanted to leave," says Ables. "They wanted a contemporary feel but a space where everyone wanted to stay because it is so comfortable."

The home's neutral backdrop leaves room for bold bursts of color in the form of vivid artwork displayed on the walls, a bright orange sofa in the living room and eye-catching pops of

lime. A fluid cohesion exists throughout the living room, dining room and kitchen, and without walls to separate them, definition between various spaces is achieved through thoughtful selections. For example, Ables found a trio of Moxie Pendants from Kichler® at Lighting Inc. and arranged them artfully above the sofa.

"We knew we wanted a statement piece that didn't take away from the view or the architecture of the space," says Ables. "We were trying to give it some interest with a sculptural type feel, but the sharp edges of the pendants keep within the same architectural style."

The architects' addition of steel beams on the ceilings throughout the span of the glass tube also brings added definition and harmony to communal spaces. Floor to ceiling windows, hardwood floors and natural materials of wood and stone featured throughout the home further connect interior spaces to the outdoors.

A floor-to-ceiling fireplace clad in Thorntree Black China tile from Stone Solutions that fits together like a puzzle anchors the living area and serves as a slate-colored background for a special tapestry that inspired the entire design.

"The color palette of the entire house was based off this



tapestry the homeowners found in the Galapagos Islands and brought back to Alaska with them," says Ables. "When we started building the house, they mailed it to me and it became the inspiration for the design — you can see every color of the house in this tapestry."

The clients provided all of the artwork displayed throughout the home, and each piece has its own interesting story or personal meaning behind it, says Ables.

The kitchen, wrapped by Madreperola quartzite countertops and "Caramel Sundae" glass wall tile, functions like a dream when entertaining or just enjoying the view and sipping coffee at the island, says Ables. She says guests naturally gravitate to the generous island, take a seat in one of the white leatherette Pera counter stools and chat while enjoying appetizers and wine. Above the sink, a large, full light picture window frames the sparkling lake just beyond.

"I love how the house feels and how it lives," says Ables. "The spaces are open but well defined, and the furniture and accessories are contemporary yet really comfortable."

It seems the homeowners, who lived in Alaska throughout the duration of the project but made numerous trips down during



both design and construction phases, couldn't be happier since moving into their contemporary Lake Austin home either. Since relocating, LaRue says they've enjoyed their waterfront views and taken advantage of the lakeside lifestyle and boating opportunities that unfold right in their backyard.

"The homeowners are a wonderful couple who have two grown kids who visit often to enjoy family time and all the amenities," says LaRue. "They have enjoyed their retirement these last few years in Austin." ❖

ARCHITECT LaRue Architects
512.347.1688 | Larue-architects.com

BUILDER Matt Sitra Custom Homes
512.600.3459 | Mattsitrahomes.com

DESIGNER Paula Ables Interiors
512.658.4534 | Paulaablesinteriors.com

LANDSCAPE DESIGNER Land Restoration
512.989.1488 | Landrestorationtx.com