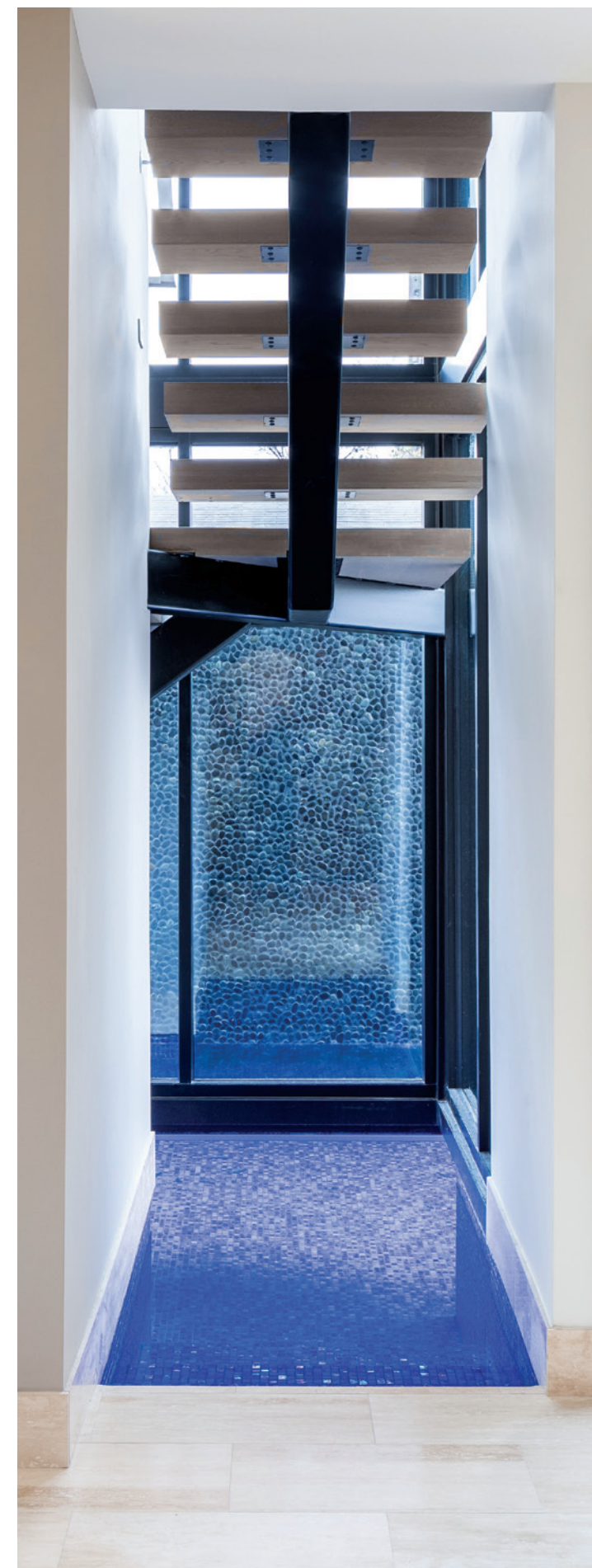




ON THE WATER, IN THE CITY

By Mauri Elbel
Photography by Charles Quinn

Imagine walking downstairs in a swim suit, stepping your bare feet onto smooth travertine before dipping them into a pool of water and swimming beneath the wall of glass separating the indoors from the outdoors. Gliding weightlessly back and forth in the outdoor lap pool abutting the house without ever opening a door sounds a bit like a far-flung fantasy. But it's an architectural reality for a professional couple living in a spectacular modern oasis in the middle of bustling Central Austin.



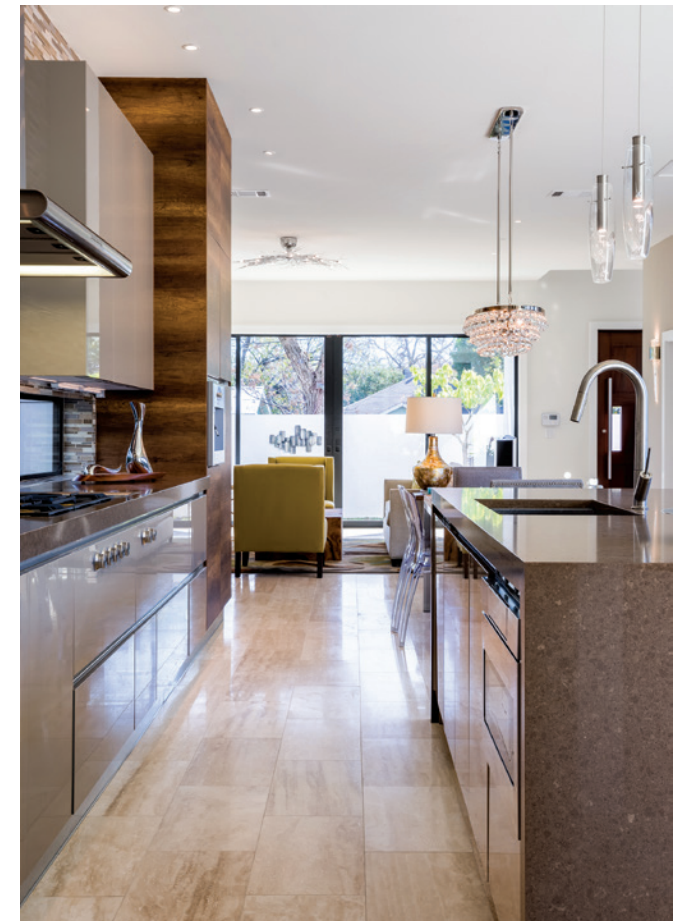


A joint collaboration from Steve Zagorski Architect, Smith Builders and Denise Foester Interior Design, the stunning stucco and glass house tucked off of 45th Street and Red River was built for a pharmacist and a doctor who has a medical practice right next door. Inspired by the famous Schroder House built in 1925 by Gerrit Rietveld, the three-story home emulates an exploding cube with its linear layers and floating sheets of glass.

“The house was meant to be a sculptural piece of art as much as we could make it that,” says Zagorski. “There is a little bit of a play on interiority and exteriority. It is a little ambiguous on what’s inside and what is outside which helps create the illusion of making the house feel bigger, too.”

Prior to the project, Zagorski had worked with the clients on an addition to their previous home located on the lake. When they were ready to build on their centrally-located property shared with the doctor’s existing office building, they hired him once again.

At 3,400-square-feet, the three-story house makes the most of its limited lot size while creating a deceptively large and open feel on each floor thanks to the ample use of glass which blurs the lines between inside and out. A 25-foot NanaWall system can be opened to further expand the first floor and connect it to the outdoors with creamy travertine floors continuing to the lap pool which forms part of the home’s foundation.



A weeping wall, made with river rock from Mexico, features sheets of continuously flowing water to create a tranquil experience. Lueders limestone pavers allow the doctor to “walk on water” for his commute to and from the office — a concept that began as a joke before being integrated into the design. A three-story glass tower that houses an elevator features a suspended glass corner that allows the pool, beautifully executed by Richard Lynch from Pools-apes, to become an integral feature inside the home.

The various architectural details found throughout the home weren’t easy to execute, admits Cary Smith, project manager with Smith Builders who came on board after the original builders backed out of the challenging project before construction began. Citing a long list of challenges ranging from excavating the site eight feet to get to the right soil to working around the clock with engineers to properly hang the floating sheets of glass and creating the floating structure over the pool, Smith





says one of his favorite things about the design was getting all of the tricky details right.

“Bringing all of the structural aspects together is part of what makes me so proud of this project,” says Smith. “It was a challenge trying to get it all right. This was something we had never done and a little unusual to say the least, but it turned out great.”

It’s all of the special details that combine to become the design’s greatest assets: the dangling light fixture that extends from the third floor down to the first floor; the cube-like master bedroom with skylights that lead to the rooftop terrace — a spot to relax and soak in views that eyeball the downtown skyline and The University of Texas at Austin Tower; the floating staircase with handmade white oak treads.

Ultra modern on the outside, the home’s exterior is defined by white stucco and glass with clear cypress soffits. But inside the home, interiors designed by Foester take on a more transitional feel. Combining clean lines and glossy, polished finishes with warm colors and softer upholstered pieces, the vibe is elegant yet comfortably livable.

“My clients wanted their home to be stylistically modern without being cold and sterile,” says Foester. “Once you enter the home, it feels like an oasis in the middle of a busy neighborhood that is part of a growing and dynamic city. It does not matter that there are windows everywhere. Once you are in the house, the rest of the world fades into the background.”

The kitchen, with modern European-style cabinets and German appliances, set the tone for the rest of the interiors.

“The kitchen was basically a blank slate when I was given the first set of plans,” recalls Foester. “It was such a focal point of the first floor’s open floor plan, I knew its design would be key in creating the home my clients were dreaming of. Once the modern design was set and the warm color palette was established, the design of the rest of the house flowed seamlessly.”

Now the light-filled space boasts Wild Rice Caesarstone® countertops, a backsplash in Stone Solutions Twilight Mist, glossy beige and caramelo wood cabinets, and statement lighting such as the Robert Abbey oval chandelier hanging above the dining table.

On the second floor, the master bathroom is a modern interpretation of a Turkish bath with polished Carrara marble floors, Tundra Grey marble shower walls and Brazilian Carrara countertops. The master shower head is built into the skylight which gives the illusion of being rained on in the sunshine.





For a couple used to living on the lake, moving to the city didn't require sacrificing water views. And of all of the home's exceptional details, it's the ability to swim outside without ever opening the door that remains the most spectacular.

"You can get up from your living room chair and walk over to the stairs and you are in the pool," says Smith who couldn't resist experiencing the sensation for himself one day right before the home was complete. "I can't describe it. It's just fantastic." ♦

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