



# SOUTH TEXAS OASIS

By Lauren Jones Photography by John Foxworth

*For Austin-based architect Chris Sanders, this Mexican-inspired outdoor living space is both an homage to the beauty of “Big Sky Country” and treasured memories of times past. Built on his in-law’s 6,000-acre family ranch in the unincorporated Duval County, it’s the ideal place to cool off on a summer day or for a leisurely evening of rooftop stargazing.*

**R**aised in Lufkin, Texas, architect Chris Sanders has always had an appreciation for nature and the relationship between architecture and its environment. And for the Temple Ranch Pavilion, completed approximately five years ago, that dedication to designing a sustainable structure that complemented its surroundings shone through.

“The inspiration was to create a place on the property where you could be in the shade and out of the shade and occupy the space by the pool,” he says.

Because shade is a premium and May to October can be quite uncomfortable on the ranch, Sanders and his team looked to traditional Mexican and Central American structures for guidance. “They had shade structures called jacal structures,” he explains. “There are not a lot of big trees in that part of the country, so indigenous people would gather sticks to create this dappled shade. This is a modern take and we took cedar logs and laid them in a steel frame, which allows for good airflow.”







In addition to focusing on this shade structure, the actual design is quite simple. “There are really only three enclosed spaces,” he says. “There’s a changing room, a little breeze-way, a bathroom and a storage room, otherwise it’s all about occupying around the building, under the jacal and on the rooftop terrace.”

With views for miles, Sanders’ family hosts many events out at the pavilion, which is just steps away from the main house. But one, in particular, will always hold a special place in his heart.

“My in-laws bought this ranch in the early nineties,” he says. “I was living in Boston at the time and was home for the millennium. My brother was the ranch manager there and the family was having a Y2K party. I went as his guest and met my wife that night.”

While a lot has changed since 1999, the tents for that Y2K party were set up right where the pool and cabana stand today. The ranch itself has also seen some major renovations. Sander’s former firm, Andersson Wise, was hired to revamp the lodge and the sleeping cabins, which exist around the property.

“The main building material was this Mexican hand-molded brick that was made in a wood mold,” he says. “Mexico is about 45 minutes south, so [Duval County’s] relationship with Mexico is probably stronger than with the Lone Star state.”

In respecting the property’s design and its roots with its Southern neighbor, Sanders used those same Mexican

bricks, limestone, wood and steel building materials that would also stand up to intense UV exposure. “We learned over the years that anything painted or stained would just deteriorate over time,” he adds.

Inside, the pavilion honors the palette of the Southwest. “We worked with an interior designer named Mimi London,” he says. “She used lively, spirited colors. In the kitchen, [which is carved into the building], it’s like a geode when those big sliding doors open to reveal this cool blue. In the bathroom, she used that same blue, while the other spaces [like the terrace and dining area] used more traditional warm tones.”

From the architecture to the intentionally designed colors, it’s easy to picture oneself lounging poolside. “It’s not just an outdoor space,” Sanders says. “When you begin to approach it, you realize the subtleness in the detail in not just the colors, but in the textural qualities of how the building relates to its place. There’s a sense of comfort there.” ♦

**ARCHITECT** Sanders Architecture  
512-482-9258 | [www.sanders-architecture.com](http://www.sanders-architecture.com)