



# GRAND OPENING

BY KIMBERLY SUTA | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREA CALO



MCKINNEY YORK ARCHITECTS, BASED IN AUSTIN, TEXAS, WITH A SATELLITE OFFICE IN SAN ANTONIO, RECENTLY COMPLETED AN EXTENSIVE HOME RENOVATION IN SOUTH AUSTIN, PROVING IT IS POSSIBLE TO TRANSFORM ANY HOUSE INTO A DREAM HOME.

The home's new transitional look features a steel entry door and windows by Rehme, courtyard cylinder sconces by BK Lighting and additional exterior doors by Loewen. The new courtyard wall provides privacy at the home's entrance while being just low enough for homeowners to interact with passing neighbors.



“A LOT OF PEOPLE FEEL RESIDENTIAL WORK IS maybe the most personal work you do. Obviously, the clients are strongly engaged. We find that it’s really important for us to be thinking about engagement and belonging,” shared Heather McKinney, FAIA, RID, McKinney York Architects’ founder. “These clients hadn’t had a lot of experience working with architects, but they were very intuitive and really understood what was happening with the transformation of the house.”

The homeowners have lived in and raised their children in this 1980s house in a neighborhood just north of Barton Creek Mall for many years, but the home’s galley kitchen was in need of an update and choppy ceiling planes throughout hampered an easy, natural flow between spaces.

The library entry is the centerpiece of the house, drawing the eye with a striking turquoise color on the back of the bookshelves called Vardo by Farrow & Ball that is illuminated by an elegant pendant light fixture by Bocci. The gorgeous, curved staircase is streamlined with a custom carved white oak rail, steel pickets and plaster.



“There were two reasons we decided to do the renovation – one was the kitchen and we also wanted to create a grown-up space which had room for our daughter,” explained the homeowner. “The most stunning and unexpected result for us is the way we can now move through our house and how beautiful the interior views are.”

McKinney York determined that the home needed a full-house redesign focused on releasing the energy of the house to allow it to flow fluidly. To begin, the former formal dining room was eliminated and the space was divided to create a foyer where there was not one before and expand the kitchen’s footprint.

The grand foyer, which also includes the home library and a sweeping curved staircase, became the fulcrum of the

The bright and airy kitchen, ideal for cooking while guests enjoy a front row seat on chic wood and bronze stools, showcases beautiful Artemis quartzite countertops, island and pendant lighting by Restoration Hardware, a backsplash by Heath Tile and cabinet paint by Farrow & Ball. Also notable is the white oak flooring, which can be seen throughout the entire home.

The dining room, with its unique, show-stopping ceiling, cleverly opens up to the second story where new enlarged windows on either side bring in natural light during the day. In the evenings, the guileless pendant lighting by Restoration Hardware takes over.





remodeled home and links all the spaces together. Downstairs, the living room, kitchen, laundry room and guest wing radiate from the open entry area, while upstairs, the primary suite, the daughter's suite and a balcony flow from the staircase opening. Windows were added to illuminate the dramatically reorganized ceiling planes, which now define the gathering and circulating spaces, creating an open, airy feel.

"I have to say that this is my favorite space in the house," confided Heather of the newly designed foyer, and she's not alone. It just so happens to be the owners' German Shepherd's favorite spot as well. "The homeowners love the connection to four different spaces from the library. It is one relatively small space, which makes all the other spaces feel bigger."

The secret spiral staircase by Paragon is easily the highlight of the guest bedroom. However, the modern guest bathroom is a close second, featuring the refined mottled blue penny wall tile by BPI that serves as an ideal backdrop to the lovely white cabinetry.

The star of the upstairs bathroom is the simple yet playful black and white shower tile with stylized flowers and patterns by Arizona Tile, which is perfectly offset by the hexagonal honed black marble floor tile from Materials Marketing.



Heather also notes that the magnificent library serves to offer guests clues about the owners. "It's full of books and things they really love. Even picking the paint color for the back of the shelves was a really fun thing that pops and enriches the space," she added. The homeowner concurred, "I loved the concept of the library in the entryway as soon as Heather suggested it. What was most incredible to me is that it was the first thing that taught me what architectural design actually is. Heather noticed that we love books and decided to make books a center of our home. In that way what I saw was Heather striving to make our house a reflection of us. She showed us things about ourselves we might not have so quickly identified."

The newly expanded kitchen is also a cherished space, providing ample room for family and friends to gather – cooking, chatting, having a glass of wine, all at the same time. What was once a galley kitchen with only one way in and out, is now nearly double in size and connects with the entry, living, dining and both front and back gardens. "The function of it is the most incredible part of it. Everything is right where we need it. What's amazing about this kitchen is we even like cleaning it up," the homeowner laughed.

Other highlights include the removal of a former bar and the original staircase, allowing McKinney York to create a new dining room and turn a small guest room into an





in-law suite of sorts with its own secret spiral staircase leading up to a TV room, bathroom and porch that can function independently from the rest of the house.

Now, the newly remodeled home can be classified as transitional in style, falling somewhere between modern and traditional. “It’s very spare, understated and tailored. The clients are very tailored. It’s edited, but there’s not a lot of fussiness to it,” explained Heather. “It allows for all kinds of art in the space as well as antique furniture that blends with the more modern pieces. In the living room, for example, are chesterfields and beautiful antiques, including a grandfather clock.”

The redesign also created opportunities for new fresh air spaces, such as a screened porch, living room balcony and a semi-private streetside courtyard that the owners adore. The courtyard is sheltered by a finely calibrated garden wall, which allows neighbors to see the tops of the homeowners’ heads as they sit in the evening shade, encouraging friendly conversation. “They’ve found they like to be out there when it’s hot and the sun is to the west. It’s a really shady space and when the neighbors walk by, they come over and say hi, so all of a sudden, they have developed a camaraderie with their neighbors. They say it’s so much more fun now for them where before they never went outside the front of the house,” said Heather.

The homeowners, who have exceptionally busy lives, truly wanted to create a home that was peaceful and found the perfect partnership to bring that intention to fruition. “We like being home now because it feels so good to be home. Sometimes we’re not sure where to be because it’s so much fun to be everywhere. We ended up with a house that feels like a retreat,” shared the homeowner. ♦

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A spacious new screened porch sits just below a series of upper-level balconies that can be accessed from different areas of the home. All overlook the pool, lush landscaping and mature trees.