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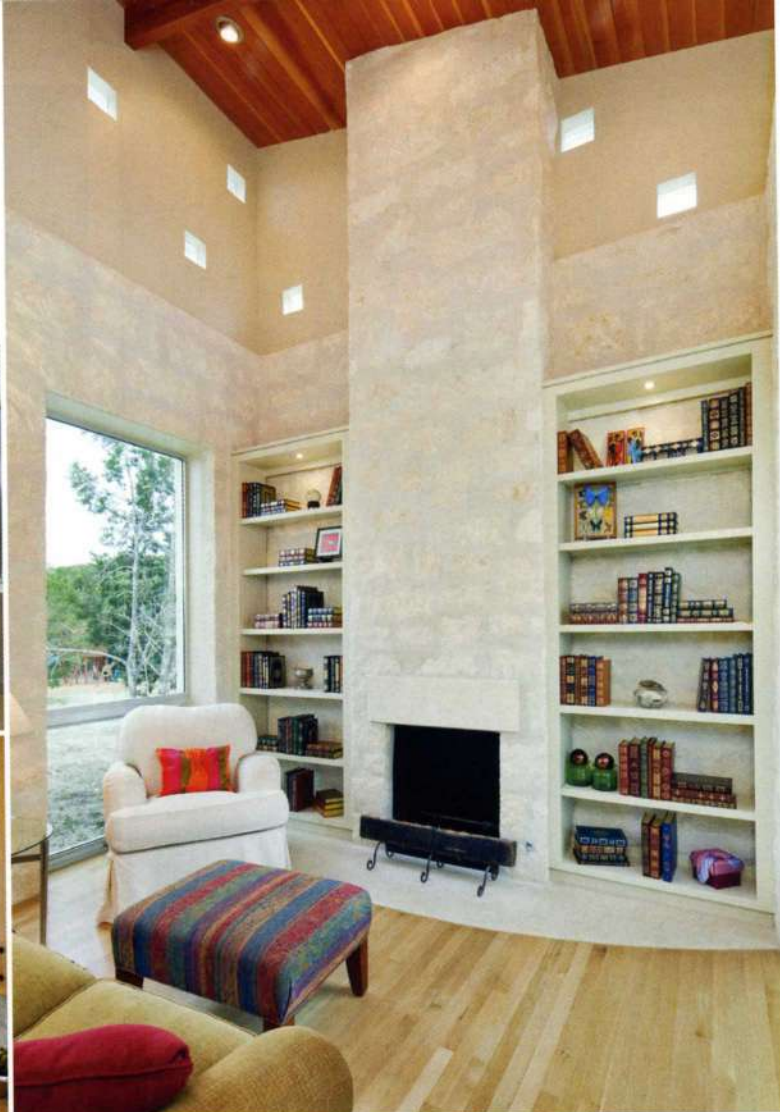
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The orientation of the house allows the living areas to have light enter through large banks of windows while still having privacy from neighbors. The interior is bathed in neutrals so as not to distract the eye from the house's amazing views.



House Blend

A contemporary home in Wimberley fits seamlessly into its more traditional surroundings BY JENNY PETERSON

Ask Austin architect Neel Morton what his typical project is, and he will tell you, "There isn't one." That's because each of his designs and projects is highly customized to the site and to the wishes of the client. And that was good news to John and DeAnn Murphy and their two children, Morton's clients seeking a new home in Wimberley.

At a time in which the Austin area has seen many contemporary homes springing up in the midst of established neighborhoods, Morton has a firm philosophy that guides all of his projects: create sophisticated yet low maintenance, sustainable designs that offer his clients a contempo-

rary sensibility while giving a nod to the surrounding aesthetic. And even though one glance wouldn't do the Murphy residence justice, that is all that's needed to immediately recognize this philosophy.

The exterior of this 3,900 square foot Hill Country modern home in the Spoke Creek section of Wimberley features instantly recognizable limestone siding as well as the customary metal roof. The limestone even boasts a traditional "German smear" technique where the mortar is spread over the face of the limestone so that the edges aren't as visible. Married with these traditional materials and techniques are brightly colored, smooth stucco walls—a purple-hued one at the entry and a bright orange section in the rear of the

house—that quickly and impressively speak of a contemporary aesthetic.

Built by Grady Burnette Builders, the three-bedroom house is oriented to take advantage of not only sun patterns and breezes, but the view of a nearby creek as well. And while not immediately recognizable, this airy and open design smartly employs walls rather than window coverings to create privacy from neighboring views. The result is a home that feels and looks light-filled with its banks of windows, yet has achieved some hospitable separation from nearby properties. And, as with all great designs, the interior and exterior aesthetics flow seamlessly, creating a cohesive home for this family of four.

Take the limestone, for example. This common building material is often found on exterior walls and landscapes, but in the Murphy residence, it composes the bulk of the kitchen and bar-area countertops. This construction enables the family to take the inevitable spills and accidents without the normal fear of too-precious surfaces being ruined. And while



Though a bright-orange section at the back helps give a contemporary aesthetic, the house still fits with the rest of the neighborhood.

nearly every house has wood surfaces inside, not many have a children's playroom/adult office with poplar walls and a master bathroom with a wood-lined ceiling like the Murphys'.

Smack of outdated paneling and lodge materials? Not so in this contemporary home, as great care was taken to create spaces with warm and inviting elements. "It may seem trite," Morton says, "but we really want to create homes that are nurturing to the people who live in them. A common trap of 'modern' design is that the houses can end up feeling cold and sterile, all glass and steel. We really try to avoid that."

Says contractor Grady Burnette: "There was a very high level of expectation in terms of craftsmanship. And that is very appealing to me as a contractor. I was fortunate to work with a highly effective architect as well as a supportive homeowner with great taste."

Once the house was constructed, interior designer Laurie Smith entered the picture. Keeping the warm contemporary sensibility going, she opted for neutral walls with pops of color in the furniture textiles and artwork. The choice of neutrals also had the advantage of not distracting the eye from the house's astounding views of a spring-fed creek. The eclectic furnishings pair perfectly with the home's structure without overpowering it, witnessed by the red-and-apple-green scheme in the playroom, the spa-like features in the master bathroom and the red countertops in the additional bathroom.

The master suite also joins in this successful interplay of old and new, with its pale wood floors and soaring pitched ceiling grounded by an elegant Oriental rug and funky purple accents. But perhaps one of the most striking features in the house can be found above the bar, where a dramatic backsplash of backlit onyx graces the entertaining space. Fiery shades of red, golden yellow and orange explode in this small area, bringing an unexpected punch to otherwise subtle surroundings.

Is there a particular color scheme? No. Are there recurring design elements? Not really. Do the furnishings come from a specific decor era? Not at all. And that's precisely what makes this house a livable, warm, organic, sophisticated and unceasingly interesting home. The Murphy house respects its Hill Country environment while speaking to a more current and lively vibe—not a bad way to raise a family in style. ■

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