

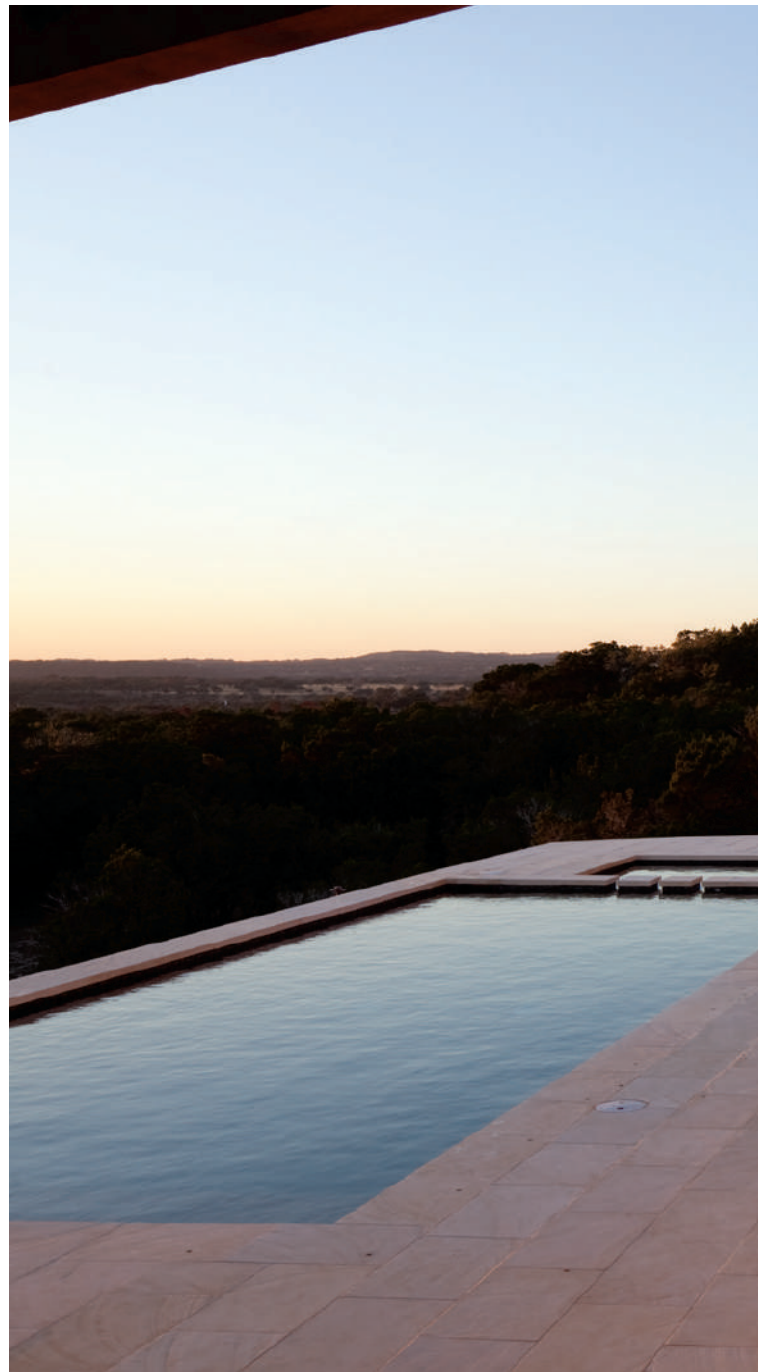
BLURRING THE LINES BETWEEN INSIDE AND OUT

By **ASHLEY FESTA** | Photography by **PAUL BARDAGJY**

This Wimberley home was an architect's dream job. With nearly 6,000 square feet of house to take advantage of the 270-degree panoramic Hill Country view, architect Neel Morton, AIA, of Office of Architecture, created a striking and unusual get-away residence.

The location and existing landscape drove the design of the custom home. Situated on the edge of a small bluff, the land was in a perfect position overlooking two of Wimberley's iconic landmark landscapes and a beautiful meadow, home to many types of wildlife.

The project included two important challenges: to preserve as many live oaks on the property as possible, while taking advantage of the sweeping country views. The floor plan Morton designed became a giant puzzle, piecing each room together in an unusual layout so as to maximize the outdoor beauty on the inside of the home.







To start, Morton had to determine what he was working with. The homeowners and architect worked together for several months to select a location that was private, away from the road and, of course, took advantage of the best view the property had to offer. The owners had a number of options on their 12-acre site, but it was difficult to tell what would be the best location for the home.

“Undeveloped property is often overgrown with cedar,” he said. “Sometimes you can’t see what you’ve got because of the cedar. So we narrowed it down to two sites we thought would be good and cleared the cedar out so we could really see what the sites offered and what the views would be like.”

A survey of the land revealed which site offered enough area for the house and where the fewest live oaks would be disturbed.

“I started putting these building blocks together, organizing them to take advantage of these views,” Morton said. “I spent a couple of days marking out the views and noting the angles. Then the general plan fell into place.”

What he came up with might seem a little unusual, but turned out perfectly for the homeowners’ wish list. The final design disturbed only two live oaks and offered gorgeous views



for nearly every room in the house. Morton’s plan called for storefront windows all around the home to help bring the outside, inside.

The master bedroom, game room and one of the guest bedrooms look out over one of Wimberley’s notable peaks, called the Twin Sisters. The master bedroom enjoys a view over the meadow as well. And overlooking the meadow with the most panoramic scene in the house are the living room, dining room and kitchen, each of which provide views of Devil’s Backbone, a



long and high ridge of hills whose foliage is ever-changing with the seasons.

“There are a number of places where exterior materials flow into the interior of house, which blurs the line between inside and outside,” Morton said. “We fully engage the inside of the house with the site. Even when I’m inside the house, I’m still interacting with the outside.” He noted that the changes in light throughout the day as well as watching wildlife crossing the meadow reinforces the inside-outside flow to the house.

Because the four-bedroom, four-bath and two-half bath home is a get-away for the Houston residents, the three guest bedrooms are situated on the opposite end of the house so the homeowners have a quiet place to retire while family and friends enjoy the vacation retreat. Adjacent to the guest rooms is the media room, which has a closet and bathroom access and could be converted into a bedroom in the future.

With the architectural design and material selections in place, the builder took over. Micky Maness, of Coachman





Homes, helped the owners create their energy-efficient, low-maintenance home.

Starting on the outside of the house, Morton selected a combination of stucco and Massaranduba siding, a durable, long-lasting and beautiful plum-colored wood siding. Also known as Brazilian Redwood, Massaranduba requires little maintenance, a big plus for the homeowners. Another low-maintenance feature is the unconventional galvalume, rather than wood, fascia. According to Morton, galvalume is similar to a galvanized finish but better in that it is longer lasting, prevents rusting and provides more even coloration.

To help keep the house cool in the Texas summer sun, Maness installed polished concrete floors throughout most of the house. Some bedrooms are carpeted, while the game room features a fir wood floor reclaimed from a silo at an old farm being dismantled.

On top of the house, the galvalume roof reflects sunlight, also helping to keep the interior cool. The home's solar panel system and the on-demand water heaters support the home's effort toward energy efficiency.

With the help of Page Gandy, designer at 3 Fold Design Studio, the homeowners created an interior look that complemented the overall architecture while also continuing the theme of easy, low-maintenance and modern. "The homeowners have a daughter so they didn't want anything too precious — so she could play everywhere," Gandy said.

Her first challenge was to create spaces that took advantage of



the home's floor plan. To prevent furniture from visually floating in the large, open rooms, Gandy needed to define each separate space. Her solution used rugs to outline specific sitting areas, especially in the living room and game room.

The home's architecture also guided furniture and lighting choices. Gandy and the homeowners wanted to allow the outdoor scenery to take center stage. By keeping a neutral indoor palette of grays, creams and browns, Gandy ensured that the outdoors remained the focal point of each room.



Meanwhile, Gandy helped the homeowners determine which areas needed something for extra visual interest. For example, the high ceiling in the dining room. “With a wall of storefront windows, we needed a statement piece to capture attention.” They selected a custom-made chandelier.

“We had to decide where we needed statements and where other lighting should disappear into the background,” Gandy said. The kitchen was one such area. She knew the kitchen’s lighting needed to be minimal so as not to detract from the handmade glass tile backsplash. In the dining room, the table and chairs were kept simple so the high ceiling could show off a lively light fixture.

“We didn’t want a big light in every room because we didn’t want too many ideas competing with one another,” Gandy said. “Sometimes we let the view be the centerpiece. We wanted to push the outside into the living areas. It’s a marriage of indoor and outdoor spaces.” ❖

ARCHITECT Office of Architecture
512.847.7600 | Ooarch.com

BUILDER Coachman Homes, Inc.
512.844.5843 | Coachmanhomesinc.com

DESIGNER 3 Fold Design Studio
512.524.5408 | 3folddesignstudio.com