



HIGH ROAD HOME

By Claudia Alarcón | Photography by Lars Frazer

When Jeannie and Hunt Cairns decided their 1970's home needed a facelift, they knew they would face a lengthy, intensive remodel process before the outdated home could meet the needs of their busy family. The Cairns brought in architect Dianne Kett of DK Studio in Austin to assess the property and come up with viable solutions.



“The house had low ceilings, a stone veneer we did not like, and worst of all, the carport was blocking our view,” says Kett. “We went through a series of remodel and addition designs. With the remodel we were forced to work with some things we could not change, such as ceiling heights, relocating windows, having eight-foot tall doors instead of 6’-8”, the existing roof pitch, and orientation of the main living areas. The cost became so large that we decided to tear the existing house down and build something that they really wanted and also took full advantage of the incredible view out of the rear of the property.”

After this intensive process, Kett understood exactly what the homeowners wanted and set out to design the new home. For architectural style, the couple wanted a more contemporary design with simple lines and a low pitch, flat roof. “I

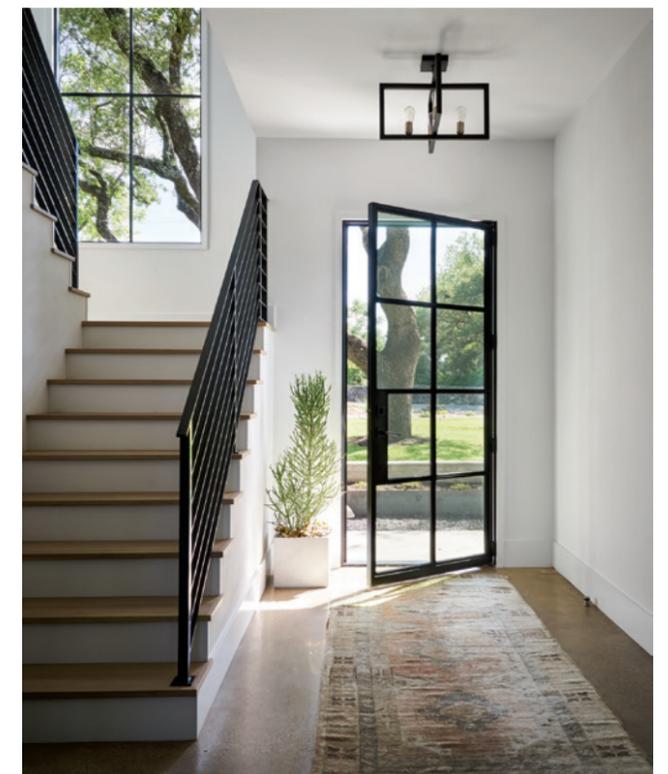
wanted to take advantage of the view and bring the ‘outside inside’ with the windows and the big glass door connecting the screened porch to the living room,” says Kett. “Jeannie is a fabulous cook, so she wanted a large kitchen and pantry. They entertain a lot of guests for dinner, poolside, and host many overnight guests from out of town.”

With the design in place, local builder Watermark Homes stepped in to tear down the existing structure and build the new home. The new house is approximately 3,800 square feet, with the addition of a new 445-square-foot screened porch, an outdoor grilling porch and a three-car garage. Kett decided to reuse the foundation from the previous house and added onto it for the mudroom, laundry and garage, then poured a topping coat and polished the concrete for the floor finish. Exterior walls are coated with smooth stucco, with white interior walls and metal clad windows throughout for a bright, sunlit effect.

“There are no real hallways in the house,” says Kett. “There is an entry foyer and a landing at the top of the stairs, but we wasted no space on circulation — you move through the house room to room – window to window.” The home also includes energy-efficient features such as roof solar panels that heat the water tank, as well as a foamed attic and wall insulation.

The large screened porch, which creates an airy space that blends the home with the outdoor entertaining areas, is made from stained wood and steel. It also features a linear gas fireplace at a dining table height with a simple steel mantle. The second story porch offers a special spot to enjoy the serene vistas across the canyon, as well as some amazing sunrises. It is connected to the ground floor by a spiral staircase that offers direct access to the pool. The porch is surrounded by the same hand-made steel railings from the interior stairs and the foyer.

“We reused all the stone boulders that were taken from the site to make a tall landscape wall that created a backyard,” says Kett. “We also used them for walkways in the landscape. We have cut stone pavers for around the pool, and board form concrete walls around the pool and screened porch.” Landscape designer Alexis Bearer and her crew at Landscapewitch, Inc. can be credited for the heavy lifting. The custom-designed pool features a large shelf and spa, and the pool bath is clad in geometric ceramic tile with gold accents from Ann Sacks Tile for a dramatic color scheme. The pentagonal shape of the tile is echoed in gold hardware from CB2. Since the Cairns plan to add a Great Dane to the family, Kett had to accommodate a dog door in the towel storage area of the pool bath, which is accessed off





the outdoor kitchen. The new home also includes a music studio on the other side of the garage, which can be used as a third car garage or extra storage if the family's needs were to change.

Special attention was paid to the indoor kitchen in both function and form, with size and design carefully crafted to accommodate the homeowners' love of cooking and entertaining. The vent hood design boasts a unique wood herringbone pattern that was stained a dark charcoal to coordinate with the black wood slab cabinets. The expansive Vietnamese white marble countertops reflect Jeannie's heritage, and the island pendant lights from Arteriors Home are a simple geometric pattern in gold which add warmth to the black and white palette.

"The interior of the house blends simple, natural elements of marble, iron, wood and stone to create a modern aesthetic that is still grounded in nature," says interior designer Helen Hagan. "Most of the lighting throughout the home, including

the dining room fixture and the sparkling chrome pendant over the master tub, take advantage of new LED technologies. Upstairs, the bright, open master bath features a large steam shower with a weighty block of Negro Marquina marble, with a countertop of the same material on the master vanity. The black and white colors that unify the home create the perfect backdrop to the homeowners' art collection as well as for the richly-colored rugs found throughout, selected from Austin's Black Sheep Unique." Comfortable yet contemporary furnishings echo the dramatic lines of the house and create multiple easy lounging and entertaining areas.

In the end, the completed home met and exceeded the needs of the Cairns family, and the architect's diligence paid off, albeit not as originally expected. ♦

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