



Rather than tearing down the staircase, architect David Webber gave the 1960s stairway a facelift that included new steel-plate treads. Designer Jennifer Greer Hartmann further refreshed the space with Sherwin-Williams' Aesthetic White on the walls. Luaders limestone flooring runs underneath the Asian antique console is an existing piece.



The first time architect David Webber toured the midcentury house in Austin purchased by his clients, he saw right past oddities such as the continuous balcony on the second level where no doors led to the outside, and the excessive ornamentation on the sweeping concrete staircase. Instead, he focused on the beautiful beamwork, substantial structural system and the possibilities for creating an open floor plan that responded to the flowing indoor-outdoor house his clients envisioned. "The home already had most of what they wanted," Webber says. "But they also wanted it to be more open to the outdoors and for finishes and materials to be updated and elegant." The homeowners, too, looked beyond the peculiarities, and the wife formed an immediate bond with the 1962 structure.

"The previous owners who built the house had two girls and a boy, just like us, so determining where our twin girls and son would sleep was obvious," says the wife, a native of Sydney, Australia. "We also saw a few elements of the house, like the copper caps and gutters, as great gifts." There was no question that the structure, originally designed by esteemed Austin architects Arthur Fehr and Charles Granger, had great bones. "The only problem was the home was choppy spatially; there were simply too many rooms and walls," Webber says, noting also that the finishes were luxurious but dated. "People don't live that way anymore." To update the main floor layout, Webber removed as many partitions as feasible to create one 80-foot-long room that steps out onto an equally long covered terrace. A glass wall with custom sliding panels

In the living room, Greer Hartmann placed chairs—clocked in a Donghia trade—and a sofa, all by Chair Mink Studios, as well as the Blackman Cruz coffee table, on a Kyle Burling rug. The artwork is by OwenBaker. Christopher Cook artwork hangs above the custom fireplace by general contractor Matt Rinsinger.



**Left:** The walnut-and-blackened-steel entry wall complements the adjacent painted-chipmunk-paneled walls, which outline the kitchen cabinets. A concealed pantry resides along the wall. Painted metal beams overhead add another layer of interest. All of the appliances are by Miele, and the Hansgrohe faucet is from Moore Supply Company.

**Opposite:** The ultramodern kitchen, which opens to the rest of the house, was designed to be extremely minimal. Also cabinets from Axite European Kitchens feature a champagne-colored lacquered finish and coordinate with the Silestone countertop. Bar stools are existing pieces from the homeowners' collection.



meticulously placed to create a pattern consistent with the intervals of the existing ceiling beams now fills the back wall. "It's an extreme idea to have a long continuous open linear space echoed by a similarly long outdoor linear open space," Webber says. "The upstairs and downstairs are both studded on how to be open, but they do it in different ways that are complementary."

The now-larger entryway cried out for an establishing feature, so Webber collaborated with designer Jennifer Greer Hartmann on a walnut wall—featuring blackened-steel plates interspersed to hide electrical components—that reads like a midcentury piece. According to Greer Hartmann, who worked with the owners on their previous residence, although midcentury influence was a factor, when it came to the finishes and color scheme, the

couple sought a different direction. "They wanted a more classic, contemporary feel," says the designer, who introduced soft taupes and warm whites on the walls to initiate the desired ambience.

The appropriately toned painted-ash shiplap walls, meant to look like an extension of the stained cypress on the exterior, flow from the entryway into the kitchen, where champagne-colored lacquered cabinets line one side of the space. Designing with the wife's request for minimalism in mind, Greer Hartmann enclosed everything. "The coffee station and chopping boards are tucked away next to the oven, and a door conceals a walk-in pantry," she says. Concur Webber: "The home's materials and details seem so cohesive that it's a very quiet space visually."

**Above:** Webber conceived a glass wall with custom sliding panels that open to the covered deck and run the length of the house. Here, in a seating area that connects to the backyard, the outdoor sectional and chair are from RH's La Jolla collection.

**Opposite:** The casual yet formal dining area features a Maaiblo table surrounded by a set of antique Paul McCobb chairs found at bidco. The Rot & Hill Moods chandelier was purchased from Design Within Reach, and the glazing on the wall is by Metlic-Falls Glass & Mirror.





The architect removed the entire back wall of the house to make way for a glass wall with custom sliding panels, built by Maverick Door and Millwork. RH chairs reside near a pool by Blue Hole Pools. The team, including landscape designer Mark Word, worked to preserve the existing oak trees. On the upper level, bedrooms that face the backyard received new Juliet balconies.

Furnishings proved to be a breeze as almost all the pieces selected by Greer Hartmann for the couple's previous residence looked equally at home in their new digs. Their chenille-covered sofa and chairs with a jacquard weave, for example, were a perfect fit in the living room, which features all existing furnishings with the exception of a new armoire. Similarly, in the master bedroom, save the addition of new side tables, the existing pieces handily made the transition. "If you buy things you love in the first place, you can make them work anywhere," says Greer Hartmann.

Throughout the process, Webber was mindful of honoring the original architecture while embracing the need for change. "I felt like it was our duty to uphold the strongest points while taking liberties with the weakest ones," he says. Regarding the latter, he replaced the non-functional front balcony with a single metal planter box more in scale with the building and added two planters on the lower level to establish continuity and to soften the façade of the original architecture. In keeping with the home's clean midcentury lines, landscape designer Mark Word filled the upper level box with lady's slipper and the lower two with foxtail ferns. "I went with monospecies as much as possible to make a more graphic and legible statement," says Word. He then added other vegetative matter to soften the shell.

To update the staircase, Webber finished the treads with steel plates and was delighted to discover that a series of turquoise medallions on the metalwork easily popped off, leaving a pleasing, more simplistic geometric pattern behind. When it came to the structural systems, the architect recommended exposing the original decking by removing the upper-level flat ceiling, which general contractors Matt Risinger and Eric Rausser, as well as project manager David Moody, accommodated. "We thought the true nature of the architecture should be expressed on the interior, and we could insulate on the outside," says Risinger, who was hired for his expertise on old buildings and notes that the house is a net-zero energy structure. "And when the architect introduced a clerestory window that ran the length of the entire second floor, we engineered a duct system, in collaboration with integrated design and building science consulting firm Positive Energy, that worked around it."

It is this blending of inside and out that really made the difference and is why the owners are so happy with the home's overall result. "I wanted to feel like we were in Sydney, where indoor and outdoor life comes together, and there's that same ease to life here," the wife says. "I feel right at home." ■



**Above:** The master bathroom's custom walnut vanity by Honka Woodworks is lit by a Modern Forms sconce; the Kohler sink and Hansgrohe faucet are both from Moore Supply Company. A Signature Hardware tap rests on flooring from Stone Source. Holly Hunt's Great Plains fabric dresses the windows.

**Left:** In what feels like a tree house, the master bedroom boasts a subdued color scheme evident in the bed's custom headboard featuring Romo linen. Paki's Montour side tables sport abacour lamps from Cuck Lighting. The window treatment fabric is by Holly Hunt, and the Daniel Austin painting is from Harmon-Meek Gallery in Naples, Florida.