

THE LIGHT HAUS

By Angela Rabke | Photography by Dror Baldinger





When Kim and Rob Kacprowicz decided to build their dreamhouse on Lake McQueeney, they knew exactly what they were looking for. The couple, both “water people,” have enjoyed the lake lifestyle for years together. “It has been a long-time dream to have a house on the water, a weekend and holiday retreat, and to raise our family skiing. We just fell in love with Lake McQueeney. It’s a super family-friendly community,” says Kim.

With half an acre of land and plenty of ideas, they approached San Antonio architect Craig McMahon, with whom they had already worked extensively on their San Antonio home. “Kim is such a unique client,” says Craig. “She is very involved, and she is specific in her goals, and is able to act as her own contractor. They’re dream clients!” McMahon’s job was to put together a design that connected every space to the outdoors, that felt livable for the outdoors-loving family of three, and with plenty of space for weekend visitors. The couple wanted lots of glass, and it was important that every bedroom have a view of the water. “I see so many lake houses with rooms facing the street. Who does that?!” exclaims Kim.

McMahon got busy turning the family’s ideas into plans. “We were enamored with the idea of a lantern on the water,” he says. Kim wanted a home with tons of windows on at least three sides. “It was really important to bring the outside IN,” she shares. “Most houses do this on one side, for one bedroom. I couldn’t see why we wouldn’t do it for every bedroom.” The 3,300-square-foot design is smaller than other homes in the subdivided area, but it fits perfectly among the Sycamore and Cypress trees that cover the lot and provide a privacy screen and the proximity to nature that the family desired.

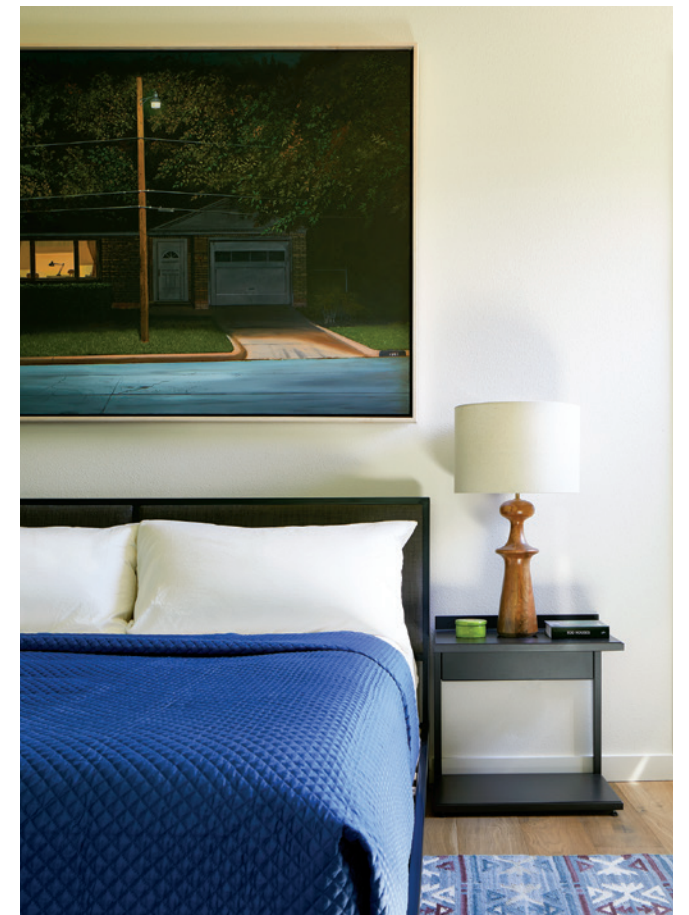
Because of its location on the flood plain, the structure is elevated 10 feet in the air, and the team worked closely with structural engineers to design an exposed, all-steel





frame for the main room that would allow three sides of complete glass and would also serve as an important part of the design aesthetic. The window installation highlighted Kim's skills as a contractor. "The windows were so large and heavy that getting them installed was a real nail-biter," she laughs. "The framers are accustomed to working with wood frames, so they didn't exactly love installing huge windows into steel – but they rose to the occasion!"

McMahon considered the Texas vernacular as he considered how to connect the tall building to the earth. "We really wanted it to feel grounded. It was important that this didn't look like a coastal house on stilts," he says. The architect doesn't typically design two- or three-story homes and was inspired to create a connection to the earth by modernizing the same techniques German settlers used to ground their homes. He designed a striking lattice screen of Douglas Fir that allows light to shine through a storage area and screened porch/media area with an outdoor kitchen — all facing the lake. "Even though it is three stories, we wanted it to feel light and airy," says Craig. "The idea was for it to feel like a two-story house with a hidden attic programmed in." As you walk up from the ground level, you encounter the giant glass box perched among the trees that is the great room. The space includes kitchen, dining and a generous wrap-around porch that further connects the family and their guests to nature on every side.





The home's footprint is tight and relatively straightforward but experiencing the light-filled space is a completely unique experience. "It's largely what I imagined," says Kim. "But the scale is even more grand than I anticipated." Downstairs, adjacent to the great room, a master suite and guest suite both face the water, while the couple's 12-year old son and friends inhabit the upstairs kids' suite, which matches the downstairs floorplan with two bedrooms and a bridge overlooking the downstairs living area. The clients were especially delighted by the view from the bunk room. "It has a perfect view of the water!" Throughout the project, McMahon incorporated big overhangs to shield the sun where needed.

While the home is a beacon of light on Lake McQueeney, it also shines a light on the magic that happens when the client/architect relationship works seamlessly. The project could have been difficult, given that the client was serving as the contractor, but with a shared vision and a teamwork, they achieved exactly what they envisioned. "Kim was, in fact, the contractor for this project, and she really fought to make the dream

and vision work," Craig says. According to Kim, "I was lucky to be able to call on friends who are trusted builders and ask them questions. I was determined to make it happen...but it was fun. I loved it." All in all, the construction process lasted about nine months – and the comparison to child birth isn't lost on the team. "Yes," Kim laughs, "we give birth to beautiful children!"

McMahon shares the affection for the project. "It blows you away when you pull up, with the transparency of the lattice work – it's stunning to be able to see that much transparency in Texas. The light, especially in the fall, is amazing." The architect notes that the challenges of the landscape, with difficult soil and being on the flood plain, are what ultimately made it shine. "It's a new version of indoor-outdoor living. While we typically use a lot of glass, this project pushed us further because it's 11 feet in the air. It's a very unusual experience." ♦

ARCHITECT Craig McMahon Architects
210-710-3874 | www.cmarchtx.com