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Remote Retreat

Craig McMahon-designed estate in South Texas has space for family and friends

BY KATHLEEN PETTY



PHOTOS BY CRAIG MCMAHON

While months of design work went in to crafting the Piebald Ranch home that would serve as a getaway for a young San Antonio family, it was one very practical element that most influenced the colors and materials: dust.

The remote, over 700-acre property that sits over an hour south of San Antonio near George West is full of rolling hills, interesting vistas and sprawling oak trees. But the raw South Texas land also means that dust collects on everything, especially dark surfaces. "They were adamant about a lighter roof, stone and wood," says architect Craig McMahon, who worked with interior designer Aimee Escamilla throughout the project.



To accomplish the owner's vision, McMahon brought in Sisterdale limestone, which is lighter than other varieties, and blended it with grays, light wood and neutral furnishings and finishes. A galvanized metal roof creates a silver color that doesn't easily reveal dust, and glass is used throughout to create the feeling of being outdoors even while inside.

Initially, the homeowners, parents of three young kids, wanted to build a main house with space for adding smaller casitas in the future for use by family, friends and business guests. Once they saw McMahon's plan, though, they decided to complete the project all at once.

The result is a 4,400-square-foot resort-like retreat with a family home that includes a master suite, a bunkroom for the kids, an office/bedroom and a kitchen-dining-living area. A covered walkway leads to three semi-detached bedroom-bathroom suites that each features a view of the landscape while affording visitors plenty of privacy.



A central courtyard, which includes a pool, fire pit and grill/outdoor kitchen area, serves as a gathering space and leads guests into the living room, which is equipped with two pocketed glass door systems meant to make the outdoor living space feel like an extension of the interior. "The inside and the outside are connected," McMahon says. "They can host a lot of people and it never feels crowded."

At the entrance, the property's history as a cattle ranch inspired a four-car covered "parking barn" designed to mimic the look of fenced steel pens where cattle were kept decades ago.

So remote that supplies had to be shipped in for construction—McMahon says the closest Home Depot is more than 2 hours away—the property has places for hunting and the owners are establishing stock ponds for fishing. The haven for their own outdoor adventures has been such a hit with visitors that even though construction finished just last year, the homeowners already are looking to expand their guest quarters.



Fact File

Bedrooms: 6 **Bathrooms:** 5 full, 2 half **Architect:** Craig McMahon Architects **Interior Design:** Aimee Escamilla, Studio E **Contractor:** Johnny Canavan Custom Homes **Awards:** Best Residential Rural Project, LaCantina Doors Awards 2018; 2018 Golden Nugget Awards Grand Award