



A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING

By Angela Rabke Photography by Andrea Calo

For several years now, one of the most popular trends in contemporary architecture has been the emphasis on connections between indoor and outdoor spaces. Another big trend: lack of clutter. This home, located in the rolling hills of west Austin, is a prime example of a dramatic residential renovation that brings these themes to life.

The architect, Jed Duhon of Studio Steinbomer, focused on two things when he first visited the home of his client, PK Toh: the view and the client's art collection. "I immediately noticed the amazing view of the greenbelt, and the house at the time only had two small windows and a door. This was the first thing I wanted to do — to take advantage of this beautiful view." Duhon also noticed PK's incredible art and artifact collection — the result of global travels. "The older design of the house was dark, and between that and some bad interior color choices, all of this really cool art just faded away." The client agreed. "The inside was pretty atrocious," said PK. "There were big clunky doors and lots of wall space that really cut off the view."

The two spent a good amount of time talking through the client's precedent photos and his ideas about redesigning the home he had lived in for four years. "I had a concept in mind," said PK. "But I had a difficult time finding the right person. I began by looking at builders, and then met Jed through a common friend. We clicked right away." As they discussed solu-

tions, PK's desire for order and symmetry became evident. "I really like open spaces, for things to line up, and I like to have a place for everything."

With that, Jed put together a plan that focused on opening up and re-aligning the main level of the house. "This project focused on the first floor, in order to balance budget with a really high level of finish out," shared Jed. "The layout is perfectly aligned along an axis, highlights PK's collections and maximizes the views."

At first glance, the exterior of the home is rather non-descript, but a massive, custom-designed wrought iron door is the first hint that this home's interior is anything but. "I think we probably spent more time on that door than anything else," laughed Jed. PK and he worked on achieving exactly what the client was looking for. "I really wanted a statement piece," said PK. "Something majestic and substantial — with weight. It needed to fit with both the front of the house and the interior." Together they put together a perfectly symmetrical double door with dramatic riveting and twelve panels on each side, as well as a speakeasy — a small hidden window that serves as an elevated peephole.



The living and kitchen space are bright, clean and open — but achieving the look wasn’t without challenges. The design team worked with Mulligan Construction and was particularly mindful of the structural challenges that come with replacing walls with windows. “There is a second floor above, so pulling in all of that glass was a challenge,” said Jed. Despite those challenges, the team was successful. A fireplace, originally placed in the corner, was awkward and consumed precious wall space, so it was moved. Now centered across from the open kitchen, it features a Lueders stone surround and is framed by some of PK’s artifacts. “I appreciated that Jed understood what I wanted, but also helped me define the things I didn’t know that I wanted,” said PK. “I originally wanted a long rectangular fireplace, and he pointed me in this direction. We went back and forth a bit, but he was right, and I am very happy with how it turned out.” The custom cabinetry surrounding the fireplace was built specifically for items from the client’s travels. “I like to collect things on trips. I have Malaysian and Indonesian statues, green bronze statues from China and Indonesia and Nepal. There is a giant Buddha head that looks out into the view, and a 230-million-year-old piece of Limestone from Utah,” shared PK. The client contacted the architect often about interior selections throughout the process. “He would often send me pictures of sofas or fixtures,” said Jed. “It was very hands on because there wasn’t an interior designer on this project. Interior finish out really mattered on this project.” PK selected items from Restoration Hardware, including the chandelier over the sitting area, to achieve a look that is both warm and masculine.

The kitchen also involved some conversation between client and architect. PK especially enjoys cooking and entertaining small groups of close friends, so a functional and beautifully designed kitchen was important. “I wanted a very big island with white stone or marble, but Jed knew that the staining would drive me crazy!” The kitchen provides ample storage and allows the wide-open space to remain orderly and uncluttered.

The client is an accomplished pianist, so adjacent to the main living space is a lounge featuring the client’s grand piano, which he often plays for visitors. “We selected darker, more intimate colors for this space,” said Jed. “My house isn’t



a party house,” shared PK. “I think of it as more of a sanctuary for a small group of friends.”

The final piece of the redesign was a utility room/client entry area. PK wanted every space to be ordered and beautiful, and for everything to have a place. In the utility room, this meant an assigned area for everything, including the client’s shoe collection.

“This is phase one,” declared PK. “Next, we will look at the second floor, garage and the exterior. “I am very happy with the way the design showcases PK’s style and his collections,” shared Jed. PK agreed. “Everything looks better with space around it.” ♦

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