



Treehouse of Style

A play area for two Westlake children is an unconventional treehouse

BY MOLLY B. KENDRICK

Architects Ada Corral and Camille Jobe have enjoyed a successful collaboration for about three years, maybe because they share a passion for introducing sharp, imaginative style to their clients' projects.

For example, in 2014, the owners of a traditional five-bedroom home in Westlake told them that they wanted a typical treehouse for their children—a girl, 11, and a boy, 7. Corral and Jobe have young children of their own, so they completely understood wanting to give the kids their own outdoor space.

"I would do anything to get my kids outside the house, away from the computers," Jobe says. But the architects agreed that they could do better than "typical."

"We didn't think that would be as inspiring of creativity and imagination," Jobe recalls.

Instead of creating a traditional treehouse, they mounted two modern-looking trapezoidal-shaped volumes on stilts—one 6 feet above the ground and the other 8 feet. With a connecting bridge, this design has a total of three different levels, giving the structure the feel of an abstract pirate ship.

Although the children frequently play on the connecting bridge, the construction emphasizes giving each child a private play area.

"Good fences make good neighbors," Jobe says.

Each treehouse has its own style—the girl picked out hot pink and orange paint for the interior of her space, while her brother went with blue and green. He can use a slide to make a quick exit from his lofty retreat. On the girl's side, the children can play on a swing, which is cantilevered out 6 feet from the underside of the treehouse.

The structures blend into the environ-

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Made from cedar, the treehouse structures feature vertical slats with gaps that allow the spaces to breathe. The children access their respective treehouses via ladders.



At night, the interior colors shine through the spaces between the slats, making the cubes look like lanterns glowing in the dark.

ment, especially during the daytime. The vertical planks mimic the shapes of the surrounding trees and are natural cedar. They'll continue to blend in more with the trees as the wood ages.

The sides of the treehouses that face each other are walled, reinforcing a sense of privacy. On the other two sides, cedar slats are spaced to let in plenty of light and air, allowing the screened-in spaces to breathe.

Each treehouse has a view of the leafy surroundings. The children climb into their space using a ladder that leads to a hatch door in the

floor. There is another ladder for the bridge, which is enclosed with mesh railings.

At night, when you turn on the ceiling lights, the interior colors shine through the spaces between the slats, making the cubes look like lanterns glowing in the dark.

Since they finished the project, Corral and Jobe have seen their young clients make the spaces their own. The boy drew all over the sanded plywood floor in his, while the girl has kept hers very tidy—a serene escape. Corral has good reason to believe that the spaces will stand the test of time. "The com-

ment we keep getting from adults is, 'I would spend time there,'" she says.

For this project, the architects had to adjust their usual approach.

"We're very attentive to detail in our normal projects," Corral says. "Obviously with a treehouse, you have to let go of some of that, because you don't want a \$100,000 treehouse."

Are there more treehouses in their future? Corral thinks it's a distinct possibility.

"A project of this scale is an easy and fun way of exploring an idea," she says. "So we would definitely do that again." ■