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HOMIE

DESIGN & DECOR





Unapologetically quirky and brimming with character, the Scenic Drive residence — one of a series of original stone cottages thought to have been part of a larger estate owned by Redford’s grandparents — is the latest project designed by Furman + Keil Architects to be featured on the AIA Austin Homes Tour. Completed in May, the design highlights the cottage’s original charm and character while thoughtfully transitioning it to an intimately-scaled modern home for its homeowner, a longtime Tarrytown resident who had admired the stone cottages for years. When the 1920’s-built property became available, he snapped it up with the long-term vision of downsizing to the property, and he hand-picked Furman + Keil Architects for the job after admiring one of the firm’s projects on a former AIA Austin Homes Tour.

“Clearly what he liked about the cottage was the original charm and scale, the materiality of the stone and the way the amazing oak trees have grown up and around the house,” says Philip Keil, principal. “It was important to him, and to us, to preserve those things.”

But the house came with a host of issues, ranging from its problematic construction and awkward additions to its lack of flow and dark, dank feel, which needed to be addressed in order to provide a clean slate for the new design.

“When we started the process of designing the remodel, it was important to let the original stone cottage carry the day,”

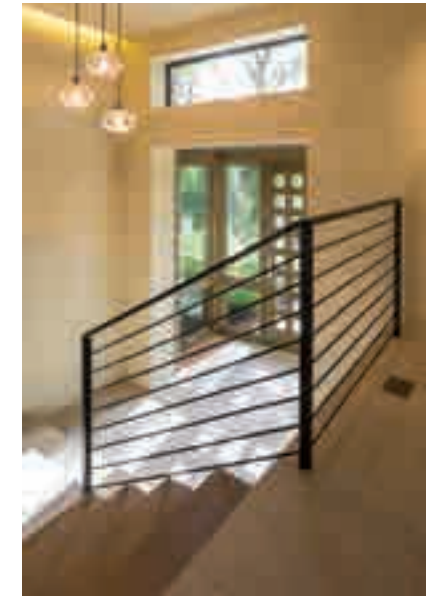


A COTTAGE WITH CHARACTER

By MAURI ELBEL | Photography by LEONID FURMANSKY

An original cottage tucked in a lakeside pocket of West Austin — rumored to be part of the estate where Robert Redford spent his childhood summers — now lives better than it has in nearly a century of existence.





says Keil. “All of the new additions serve as a backdrop to the existing construction.”

By peeling off previous piecemeal additions, maintaining the original footprint and utilizing most of the original rubble-stone masonry, the 2,182-square-foot remodel comfortably fits into the feel and context of the neighborhood. Nestled into a compact and sloping site peppered with towering live oaks, the home now connects to the outdoors with modern steel and glass boxes that break out of the original massing. The simple, unadorned stucco, glass and steel materials that make up the new construction fade into the background to allow the materiality of the original stone and shape of the gables to become the focal features of the cottage.

“Materials were specifically chosen to complement the stone,” explains Keil. “The hand-burnished, uncolored stucco is flat and featureless, to contrast with the stone’s color and texture. Steel and glass added a modern element, with the lightness of the steel playing against the heaviness of the masonry.”

The same concept was applied to the interiors. The original solid-masonry walls are rendered in off-white plaster, a design decision chosen for both technical and aesthetic reasons — the plaster can withstand moisture migration in the monolithic walls, and it also brings a soft lightness to the interiors, setting off the stone fireplace.

Even the floors — grayed-out white oak laid in a herringbone pattern with a Texas Lueders limestone border — were chosen to bring in texture and scale to the room while bridging the gap between old and new. Steel-framed soffits clad with oxidized Douglas fir over the dining and entry areas continue to the outside, creating a cohesion between inside and out. In the kitchen, Lagos Azul Portuguese limestone countertops and oak cabinets with a figured grain add texture and pattern.

“We chose to downplay color by using warm grays, and



instead feature material textures to enrich the cozy spaces,” explains Keil.

Although the lot was small, Keil says the homeowner’s spatial demands remained modest and he had a strong desire to pare the design down to the essentials while retaining its authenticity and highlighting unique features such as the interesting Viking head stone carving on the fireplace. The modern steel and glass box elements allow light to pour into the house,



creating an openness to a space that was once dark and dismal, a feel enhanced by the large skylight that now exists over the heart of the home. The concrete garage bunker into the site creates an opportunity for a rooftop deck and outdoor living space that sneaks views of Lake Austin. Before, a stone patio in the front of the house completely surrounded and choked the base of a mature

breathe,” says Keil of the landscape design. “The house sits much nicer on the land and has a much more gracious sense of entry and arrival.”

Keil credits the builder, Risher Martin Fine Homes, with bringing an impressive level of craft to a technically challenging project.

“We had some rather fussy details that we designed to try to make a clean, modern expression from what were very rustic conditions,” says Keil. “Nothing was square or plumb, and there were technical challenges with keeping the exterior monolithic stone walls. Building the house from the outside in is opposite from the way we normally build houses today.”

The decision to feature the old and quirky cottage as the focal point rather than tearing it down and starting from scratch now represents the structure’s greatest asset.

“It shows that you can create a special place with loads of character when you choose to keep a piece of the past and add onto it,” Keil says. ❖

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live oak. Removing the patio helped revert the cottage back to its original L-shaped structure with iconic gabled ends facing north and west while allowing the oak to thrive.

Landscape designers Mark Word and Sarah Carr collaborated with the firm to come up with the idea for terraced gardens that spill down to create lovely outdoor spaces, featuring planters with striated lines that carry through the raw steel and concrete site walls and the Garapa wood cladding of the garage.

“It used to be very overgrown and now it just lets the house



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