



# STYLISH SANCTUARY

*Below: Practicality blends with pretty in the upscale kitchen, a roomy, family-friendly space easily readied for wine tastings or large parties. Shelves displaying a large assortment of cookbooks were intentionally kept open. "We just thought it would be more visually interesting to show off the color of all the books," the hostess explains. "It made it look a little bit like art."*

## DESIGNING A HOME FOR ALL SEASONS

by elaine rogers • photography by terri glanger

Whether the scene is a hot summer's eve, a crisp autumn day, or a warm winter morn, the Neely residence in North Dallas has the type of beauty likely to qualify it as a home for all seasons. Of course, getting to this point involved the passing of more than a few of them.

For homeowner Esteban Neely and Mary Lincoln Neely, building new involved an intense two years of overseeing the development, design and construction of the property on top of the added stress of selling their McKinney residence and temporarily relocating their family to an apartment near the selected site. It wasn't easy, Esteban says, but the results, it appears, were worth it.

Mary, he notes, was the driving force behind the project.

"We really didn't have a particular style in mind," Mary admits. "We just had a lot of ideas about what we liked." She also had a habit of reading design and architectural magazines, clipping pictures and filing away different possibilities, and by sharing her research with the professionals they employed,

Jim Wilson Architects, Al Strangi and Greg Grey Interiors and the Dietrichson Company, the couple wound up with a home rich in highly personalized spaces. "They were a lot more involved in everything than most homeowners who do new construction," says builder Richard Dietrichson. "They worked with designers on it and they really put a lot of special and unusual touches into this home."

Six months after move-in, neither he nor the couple find it easy to describe the style they settled upon, yet all agree the results are strong on aesthetic appeal. "It's a little edgy," Mary says. "I think I'd call it California contemporary, but I doubt anyone would really know what I mean. With the stucco and clay tiles and bamboo trees and other different elements, I guess you could call it sort of a soft contemporary style with a Southwestern flavor."

Despite the lack of a firm term for what they built, the design of the spacious, two-story home has a smooth flow, a consistency of style and a range of attractive, traditional touches with a soft twist.

Architecturally, various design elements are subtly duplicated: for instance, tiny square and rectangular windows that bring in light through the fossilized limestone walls of the small wet bar near the dining room are echoed with wall cutouts above the staircase; fireplaces in the living areas, master bedroom and outdoors all feature similar cream-colored stucco and stone surrounds with shaping variances; a step down to the sunken living room downstairs is mirrored by a slight step up in the kid's living room upstairs.

International influences woven throughout the home's décor stem from the couple's travels. Mary hails from Napa Valley, California and Esteban, Chile, and the couple lived in Singapore when they first married. Business opportunities brought them to the Metroplex some years ago but the family still vacations in exotic locations. Artwork in the dining room includes paintings from Turkey and Spain, and the newest addition, an infant's ceremonial robe, intricately embellished with shells and metal, bought in Thailand and framed. In the formal

parlor, a room Mary calls her "Moroccan room," the theme is supported by touches ranging from a Murano glass elephant and ornately styled red, paisley Mohair chairs to African necklaces framed and displayed as wall art. In the kitchen, cookbooks are on display near unique treasures like a religious-themed panel from the Eastern block. "Almost everything we have up is from a trip we took," Mary explains.

Her Californian roots show in a penchant for what she terms "Zen spaces" in this home, with several smaller rooms affording opportunities for privacy and quiet reflection. A tiny study in the front of the house, beautifully appointed but unused, offers a perfect niche for stolen moments alone while Mary's office, a practical workstation tucked in an alcove behind the kitchen, overlooks what she calls her "future Zen garden." The entrance to the master suite, elongated by a small hallway styled as a private library with ceiling-high bookshelves, leads through double-doors into an Asian influenced sitting room that features views of the scenic backyard.

DALLAS/FORT WORTH HOUSE & HOME





*In the backyard, the pool is styled with a vanishing edge facing the home instead of outward toward the landscaped lot. The glitter of its tiny, multi-hued tiles and the babbling sounds of the continual waterfall enhance the property's resort-like effect. A large metal sculpture by local artist David Hickman provides a visual focal point on the multi-functional space's salt-pitted patio while single rows of young bamboo trees promise future shade.*

*Right: Set off from a wide aisle of wide-planked pine, the dining room achieves a worldly yet welcoming effect with international accents mostly acquired on family trips.*

"It's another Zen space," Mary says with a laugh. "I just like the thought of having lots of quiet places to sit and relax. Although we haven't really used them much yet, I still hope to."

A simple décor and seafoam green walls make both the master bedroom and large adjoining bath very soothing spaces, while the same color palette applied to the ceiling and accented by decorative wood beams lends a subtle drama to the spaces. But Mary's pride and joy here is a room-sized closet that encompasses her private vanity area, a feature that keeps both the bedroom and bath free of the usual signs of clutter.

Upstairs, the Neely's also insured their pre-teen and teenage daughters had fair shares of elbow space with twin-sized bedrooms, each with its own, private bath. Playful décors and vibrant paint colors like hot pink and lime green mark the girls' rooms as fun, personalized spaces well suited to their occupants' tastes. "They even chose their own tile for their baths," Mary says. "They're two and a half years apart, and I wanted them each to feel like they have their own space."

Centering the upstairs bedrooms, a large, informal family-friendly living room, furnished with black leather couches and decorated with some of the girl's own paintings, provides a place for the kids to "hang out," watch TV, do craft projects or socialize with friends.

Despite the ample opportunities for privacy and personal space, the floor plan of this home is equally strong on large, welcoming spots for group interaction. Once the strikingly wide, wood hallway draws visitors past the formal living and dining areas into the home's central hub, the kitchen and main living, it's clear that this is where the family of four logs plenty of togetherness hours.

Practicality blends with pretty in the versatile cooking zone where subtle variations of muted wall colors with names like "ponytail" and "earth ocher" coordinate with design features like the tile backsplash and range hood, creating a warm backdrop for the high-end appliances. Beneath delicate pendant lights, the oversized island with an overhang and seating for four is well-equipped for quick family dinners and teenage cookie-baking missions as well as



intimate wine tastings or large parties. The roomy floor plan includes a generously proportioned pantry and easy access to both the dining and breakfast rooms—each of which seat up to eight diners.

"We entertain a lot, so we needed a big kitchen," Mary says, noting that function was as important as form when they designed this space. Glass and wood cabinetry separating the kitchen from the living room was initially styled as a ceiling

high barrier, but the couple decided a waist-high separation was a better idea. "I realized I wouldn't see anyone in the living room when I was cooking," Mary explains. "This way, it's a far more open floor plan."

One of the best aspects of this home isn't even inside it as the great room effect of the kitchen and living extends naturally outward to the home's spacious backyard retreat. Beneath a sloped wood overhang, weather resistant wicker





Seafoam green walls and ceilings with an uncluttered style set a soothing tone in the master bedroom. The master bath (below) enjoys the same color palette plus touches of drama with its mirrors and ceiling accents.



The built-in fireplace of the outdoor living area is perfect place for a seasonal display, in this case, gourds and pumpkins plus delicate, dried holly for the mantel.



Mary Lincoln Neely and her youngest daughter, Meredith, enjoy a moment on the front porch of their new home with the family's golden retriever, Caper.

furnishings provide cozy seating by a built-in fireplace that Mary adorns with seasonal displays—for now, autumn gourds and pumpkins plus delicate, dried holly for the mantel. A large metal sculpture by local artist David Hickman provides a high-impact focal point for the multi-functional space, which includes a large built-in outdoor kitchen plus dining and lounging areas on the pool deck.

Large and visually arresting, the pool is uniquely styled with a vanishing edge that faces the home instead of outward toward the softly landscaped lot. The glitter of its tiny, multi-hued tiles and the babbling sounds of the continual waterfall enhance the property's resort-like effect. Design and landscaping touches here point to a master plan, with single rows of young bamboo trees promising future shade while the roughened texture of the

Right: Past the living room lies the master suite, complete with one of the homeowners' "Zen spaces," a sitting room for reading, reflecting or just enjoying the home's scenic backyard views.

expanse of salt-pitted concrete counters the ultrasoft effect of such a well-put-together yard.

With a creative mix of elements and in a wide variety of ways, the Neelys feel they achieved Mary's primary goal both inside and out: "I wanted it to be very attractive," she says, "but always livable and functional too." ■



DALLAS/FORT WORTH HOUSE & HOME



*In the front of the house, a formal parlor features a Moroccan theme with ornately styled red Mohair chairs and artistic accents from Africa. Ultra high ceilings with wood beam detailing and the curved flair of the fireplace surround enhance the room's visual impact.*

