

AUSTIN HOME

Inspiration For Your Space

Fall 2016

An Austin Monthly Publication

INSPIRED LIVING

Explore the 12 Houses on the AIA Austin Homes Tour



PLUS
Luxury Brands
Blitz Austin

IN WITH THE NEW





AIA
HOMES
TOUR
2016

A 63-year-old house was jettisoned, responsibly, to make room for a high-performance home that sits at the intersection of smart architecture and beautiful interior design

BY CLARE MIERS



Arguably the most interesting aspect of Jeff Capra and Laura Britt's new home—on a stately corner in the Highland Park West neighborhood—is not its modern silhouette. Or its LEED Platinum Certification. Or its landscape being designated by the National Wildlife Federation as an Urban Wildlife Habitat.

The most interesting aspect of the 2,700-square-foot, four-bedroom home is that it was even built at all.

Three years ago Capra and Britt made plans to renovate their one-story ranch home, which was built in 1951. "We designed for remodeling but realized that the foundation was insufficient," recalls Britt, one of the city's most respected interior designers. So the couple scrapped those plans and decided to build anew on their lot. (Capra and Britt donated the previous home to a family of 14 in Bertram, about 45 miles northwest of Austin, and had the 1,900-square-foot home moved to them in just three pieces. "It's the biggest recycling move we could make, recycling the *whole* house," Britt says.)

The result is a high-performance, healthy, sustainable house that shows what's possible when smart architecture meets beautiful interior design. The home will be one of 12 showcased on the AIA Austin Homes Tour on Oct. 15-16.

When approaching the front entrance of the house, which was designed by architect Tom Tornbjerg of Tornbjerg Design, visitors may be greeted by songbirds and butterflies fluttering and scatter-





ing around them. In addition, three pipes continually recirculate water, giving the sounds of surrounding wildlife a constant background accompaniment.

"I'm very much a landscaping enthusiast," Tornbjerg says. "It's really critical to knit the house into the neighborhood, and as the landscape matures, the house begins to recede some."

The home's solid design is felt at the front door. The pivot-hinged steel door is a bold entry point to the house, which was constructed by Austin and Brooke Pitner of Bonterra Building & Design.

Upon entering the home, visitors find themselves in a cozy and private entry hall. Here, a wall-hung console with mother-of-pearl fronts greets them. A Tufenkian rug soothes and sets the tone for the home's modern minimalist style. Britt also uses an antique Asian chair in the entry, reinforcing the point that antiques can have a place in modern design.

"You just have to use restraint, but you can integrate some antiques in this style," says

Upon stepping into the home, guests find themselves in an entry adorned with an antique Asian chair (opposite bottom). An open floor plan combines the kitchen, living and dining (far right) space (opposite top), and the kitchen (top) features top-of-the-line appliances from Gaggenau, Dekton countertops from Cosentino and cabinets from Heritage Joinery.



"You just have to use restraint, but you can integrate some antiques in this style," says Britt.



Britt, whose firm, Laura Britt Design, has been working on homes for 15 years. "It's all about giving things a sense of peace."

The main living area is an expansive open kitchen-living-dining space. The dining section features a table and chairs that are a part of Britt's own sustainable furniture line called Vervano. Many pieces from the line are placed throughout the home.

Also adorning the dining space is a massive contemporary oil painting by Shawn Camp. The piece's black and gray, textural—almost topographical—surface seems to be a part of the architecture plan as opposed to an element of interior decoration.

Down the hallway, organic-looking wooden sculptures by Caprice Pierucci are prominently displayed. She's an Austin sculptor who is inspired by natural earth formations blended with sensual movements.

The kitchen features Cosentino's Dekton countertops and Gaggenau appliances that have both a European style and price tag. The custom cabinets were fabricated locally by Heritage Joinery.

Adjacent to the kitchen-living-dining space sits a den that is equipped with double pocket doors for privacy.

"The den space is my favorite," Tornbjerg says. "It's an extension of the



The home has several outdoor living spaces, but the most commonly used is the porch (top and above) that can be accessed from the master bedroom (above), the living room or through a third set of sliding pocket doors just outside of Ethan's room. The Ekorre seat (opposite) from IKEA provides a cozy spot for Ethan to hang out.

LEONID FURMANOVSKY (FIREPIT); COURTESY LAURA BRITT DESIGN (2)



“The elements of design kind of reveal themselves to you,” Capra says. “And there are things that you come to appreciate as you live in it.”

living spaces but still very connected to the family. I think it’s fantastic.”

Even Ethan, Capra and Britt’s 10-year-old son, says the wide pocket doors on the den and throughout the house are his favorite feature. That’s saying something given the Chewbacca-printed bed comforter and custom book mounts in his room that his resourceful mom made.

A history teacher at the Griffin School, a college preparatory high school, Capra has space now for a book collection in the study. He relishes in the function of the home’s design and sees the beauty of new elements as he lives in the home. It took him some time, for example, to understand the value of the integrated laundry hampers hidden in the hallway between the study and master bedroom.

“The elements of design kind of reveal themselves to you,” he says. “And there are things that you come to appreciate as you live in it.”

Both Capra and Britt are happy with how the home turned out, and the latter knows how rare that is; projects can be derailed easily. She laughs at how something as simple as the wrong shelf pegs can slowly erode the overall project.

Tornbjerg agrees. “Even subtle miscues aggregate over time,” he says.

“We can all hold a vision in our heads and hearts,” he says, “but our job is to have those pieces come together.”

In this case, it did. ▲



CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: LEONID FURMANSKY (2); COURTESY LAURA BRITT DESIGN (2)





Britt came up with the idea for the custom book mounts (opposite bottom), which are steel plates that have been fabricated locally, so that Ethan (top), a voracious reader, would stop damaging the spines of his books. The master bedroom (opposite top and right) features several pieces from Britt's own sustainable furniture line, Vervano.

