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Texas Hill Country Guide

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ISSUE 15



Large windows used throughout the house invite in natural light.

Joe and Liz Duncan wanted a large, comfortable, casual yet elegant home in the Texas Hill Country that was both energy efficient and functional.

Not too many demands – but an interesting task for Austin architect Kai Geschke

Geschke, a German-born, American-educated architect, says the collaboration among the Duncans, builder David Burton of Enve Builders, interior designer Laura Burton and himself, turned out a 3,700-square-foot jewel of a home in the Austin western suburb of Bee Cave.

It is timeless in design and reminiscent of an old-timey farmhouse, Hill Country style.

As Geschke explains it, he was able to tap his German heritage to design an efficient house that traces its roots to the European immigrants who settled in the Hill Country in the 1800s.

These folks – many from Germany -- brought with them their superb carpentry and stone mason skills, which they used

German Ancestry Inspires

ARCHITECT TO DESIGN AN EFFICIENT HILL COUNTRY HOME

BY BARBARA CANETTI • PHOTOS BY TRE DUNHAM, FINE FOCUS PHOTOGRAPHY



Masonry and carpentry skills are indicative of German design.

to decorate the exteriors of their simple and resourceful homes.

They chose locally collected materials – limestone, sandstone, native woods – to build rustic looking houses, which were well crafted and well organized.

The Duncan house was designed also with “green” goals everywhere – from the environmentally friendly systems and appliances, to the deep covered porches, the cavernous overhangs shading the southern-exposure windows, the spray foam insulation in all the walls and roof, the LED lighting and low VOC paints.

In fact, the city of Austin gave the Duncan’s home a 4-star rating for energy efficiency, which also noted the rainwater collection system, the multi-stage variable HVAC system and landscaping with native, low water, drought resistant plants. ▶



A 40-foot-long covered porch overlooks the pool area – perfect for near year-round entertaining.



The house is designed with large overhangs that allow light to stream through the windows – but without the intense heat or cold.



The Duncans spend 90 percent of their time in the kitchen-dining-great room. Wooden trusses of stained fir grace the high ceilings.

“This is a pretty high performing house. We were after energy conservation,” Geschke says. “For example, there are no large windows facing west, but we still wanted natural light and brightness. So we designed the roof with large overhangs that keep out the sun and heat from those windows but allow for the light.”

And although there are trees on the property for shade, they are not too close to the house and pool.

The focus of the one-story house is the central main space – an expansive kitchen-dining-great room, where the Duncans spend 90 percent of their time when indoors. Wooden trusses made of stained fir grace the high ceilings – mostly for decoration -- with small clerestory windows in the vaulted ceiling to allow for additional natural light into the room.

The kitchen, usually the heart of a home, was designed with

fusion granite on the island counter and Lagos Azul limestone of the perimeter counters. The backsplash is Travertine, except behind the range, which uses hand-painted stone, according to the designer.

Guests enter the house through a double door and small gallery, which leads into the central mass. And like an Old World farmhouse, smaller elements flank the sides of the building – in this case the bedrooms and a garage.

The roof sports a variety of pitches and slopes, another tell-tale form from barns.

A large 40-foot-long outdoor space, which overlooks the pool, is covered but not screened and allows for almost year-round open-air entertaining.

“We wanted something unique, yet casual with a touch of elegance and very functional,” says Duncan, who divides his



The kitchen's island countertop is fusion granite, and Lagos Azul limestone is on the outer countertops. The backsplash is Travertine.

time between his ranch in Llano and this home in the Hill Country. “When the weather is nice, we open all the doors to the back porch pool area, and it brings the outside inside. This house design accomplished what we wanted.”

The Duncans worked with interior designer Laura Burton of Austin to create the warm, textural backdrop that enhances the aesthetic of the architecture and existing furnishings. But no one feature or piece fights for center stage. It is all complementary.

“The clients were drawn to natural materials that are rich in character and movement (dark stone, mesquite floors, exotic granites), so we consciously discussed which design elements would be a focal point and which others would play a supporting role,” explains Burton.

The many elements together create the feeling they desired: a casual, warm, and welcoming atmosphere for relaxing and

entertaining friends and family.”

The Duncans’ design integrates three bedrooms and a “flex” room, which can be used as another guest room or an office or a TV room. The master suite also has a cozy sitting room attached, along with an additional quiet space for the couple’s use.

Interestingly, the house was built solar-ready, which with the predominant Texas sunshine, will cut the electric bills further when the solar panels are installed. A conduit has already been mounted along the roof, rather than retrofitting the house later for solar power.

“In Germany, 90 percent of homes are built with solar energy systems. We are slowly getting into the solar movement here, so we designed the house with this in mind, says Geschke.

“This house is like a smooth running machine,” he adds.



The owners chose local materials, including limestone, sandstone and native woods for their home – to give it a natural rustic look.



The Duncans used low VOC paints, LED lighting and spray foam insulation throughout the house.



Landscaping around the pool and house features native drought-resistant plants.

Resources

HOUSE LOCATION

Development: Belvedere on Hamilton Pool Road

www.belvedereaustin.com (David Galyean)

ARCHITECT

Geschke Group Architects
5910 Courtyard Dr., Suite 350
Austin, TX 78731

512-502-8484
www.geschkegroup.com

BUILDER

Enve Builders
4807 Spicewood Springs Road
Building 2, Suite 110
Austin, TX 78759

512-971-3078
www.enveofaustin.com

CABINETS

Custom site-finished cabinets by River City Cabinets

115 E. Saint Elmo Road,
Austin, TX 78745
512-442-9990 (Amanda Bus)

STONE

Aguado Stone, Inc.
3601 Co Rd 239, Georgetown, TX 78633
512-746-5094

APPLIANCES

Thermador (through Morrison Supply)
512-810-9409 (Matt Mocniak)

INTERIOR DESIGN

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