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WHY THIS SPACE works

Designer Spotlight: Laura Burton of Laura Burton Interiors

By MAURI ELBEL Photography by MERRICK ALES

AUSTIN DESIGNER LAURA BURTON'S WEEKEND LAKE HOUSE PERCHED ON THE COLORADO ARM OF LAKE LBJ IS NOT JUST A PLACE OF RETREAT FOR HER FAMILY OF FIVE — IT IS A TESTAMENT OF THE GREEN DESIGN PHILOSOPHY SHE HAS BEEN INSTILLING INTO HER BUSINESS OVER THE YEARS.

DESIGNED AND BUILT BY BURTON AND HER HUSBAND, THEIR SECOND HOME WAS CREATED BY FOLLOWING GREEN BUILDING GUIDELINES THROUGHOUT ALL FACETS OF THE PROCESS. FROM THE PRE-CONSTRUCTION RESEARCH DOWN TO THE FINISHING INTERIOR DETAILS, BURTON'S TIMELESS, ENERGY-EFFICIENT LAKE HOUSE PROVES GOING GREEN IS NOT ONLY BETTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, BUT IS BEAUTIFUL AS WELL.

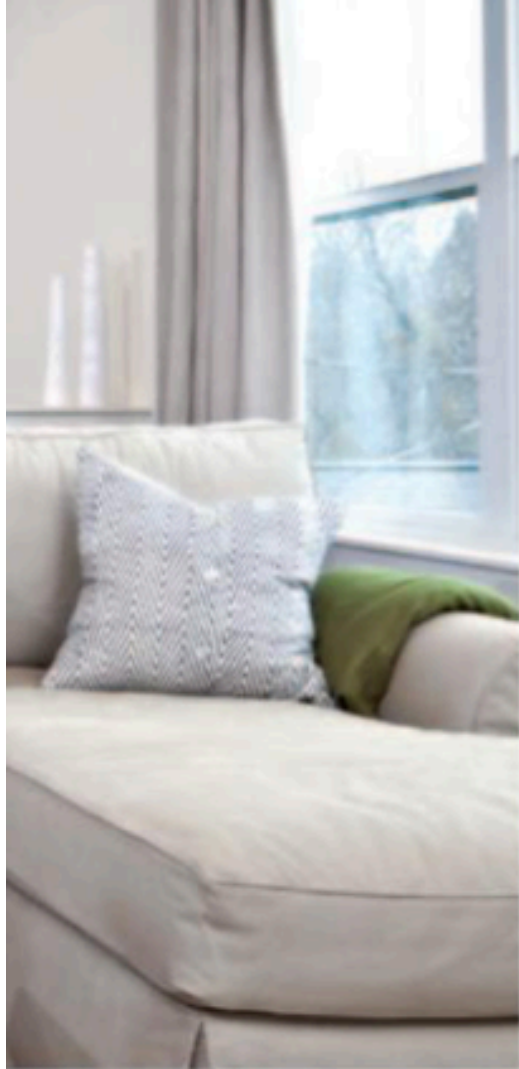
What is your philosophy on green design?

One of the core tenets of green design is to be as gentle on the environment as possible in order to preserve the long term health of the earth, its inhabitants and its resources. As a designer, this can be a challenge because clients typically contact us when they want to change their surroundings with new layouts and furnishings, which is not always consistent with being environmentally-friendly. As designers, we can be responsible and influential by educating ourselves and our clients on which choices will be

most efficient and durable, and least taxing on our resources. Repurposing existing pieces and purchasing previously-owned items discourages wastefulness, and selecting recycled products, buying locally and purchasing from sustainable vendors are great options when buying new.

How did this philosophy translate in the design/build of your personal lake house?

The neat thing when designing this lake house was that my objectives as a designer wanting to be green overlapped with our personal goals as a family. The house is very energy

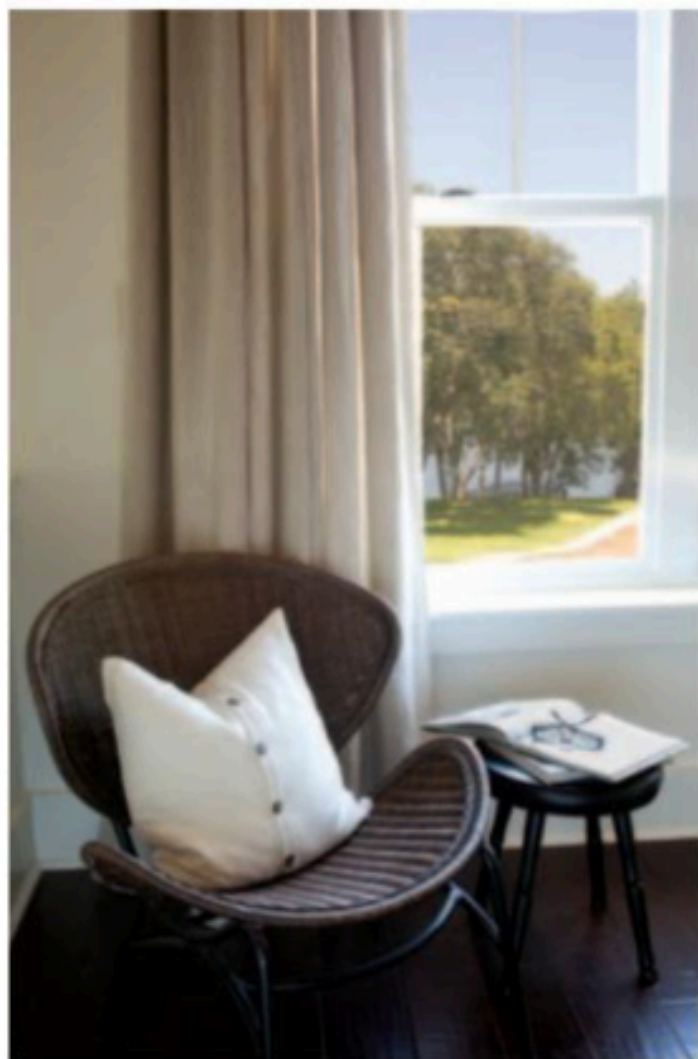


efficient, which is not only good for the environment, but also a bonus for us financially because it cuts down our costs of owning a weekend home. We used green elements throughout the planning, construction and furnishing of the house. We dimensioned to minimize building waste, and we specified a number of advanced materials and construction techniques to maximize the performance of the home. For the interiors, we used items we already had and supplemented as needed. I had accumulated lighting, plumbing fixtures and tile from various projects over the years, and my husband and I had inherited furniture and artwork from family. During the building process, we sorted through each week's construction waste to recycle whatever we could.

Can you give us a run-down of some of the green features you incorporated?

Beginning with site selection, we situated the house

to disturb as few trees as possible and preserve an existing structure. Energy efficient windows and spray foam insulation for the entire building envelope help keep utility bills down. The plumbing and light fixtures were chosen to conserve water and energy, and the HVAC system was selected and properly sized for optimum efficiency. In the kitchen, we installed ENERGY STAR® appliances, a recycling center in the cabinets, and a water filter that serves as an alternative to bottled water. Low VOC paint was used to preserve indoor air quality, and we selected durable and sustainable materials on the floors and counters that will last for years to come. Even the design style itself was selected to be classic and timeless for the sake of longevity. When it came time to furnish, we used mostly existing or re-purposed pieces, and the few items we purchased new came from vendors who are members of the Sustainable Furnishings Council, an organization that promotes sustainable practices.



Tell us why you chose a minimalist décor for the main kitchen and living areas.

This lake house was designed to be our place of escape – a weekend retreat for our family and our friends who come to visit. We wanted to make it as simple, uncluttered and relaxing as possible. I wanted to escape from the fast-changing design trends and pressures I have to deal with on a daily basis and resist the urge to re-design, which is why we chose timeless materials and went with white rather than colors. While a minimal approach is what I gravitate toward, the trick is creating a warm and inviting atmosphere that doesn't feel bare. Clutter definitely stresses us out, especially with having three kids. My husband and I edit everything that we take to the lake house – we only take things we will use.

Have you noticed any unforeseen benefits of going green?

While I had researched sustainable practices for my business and advocated green strategies for my clients, I had never lived in a green environment. One of the surprise benefits is

that the indoor air quality is superior. From the big elements like the windows, extra insulation and low VOC paint to the smaller elements such as clean-burning soy-based candles and green cleaning products, the whole house just feels and smells so fresh and pure. I notice it every time I walk in the door.

How has this lake house worked for you so far?

Honestly, I just love the simplicity and the sense of calm it evokes. And it has proven to be a perfect family gathering space, for groups both large and small. We spend all day out on the lake, and in the evening, we sit together and play board games at the reclaimed pine dining table or cozy up with popcorn on the sectional and watch a family movie. That is exactly what this house was designed for: making special memories with family and friends while being as gentle on the environment as possible so that we can all continue to enjoy it for years to come. ♦

Laura Burton Interiors

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