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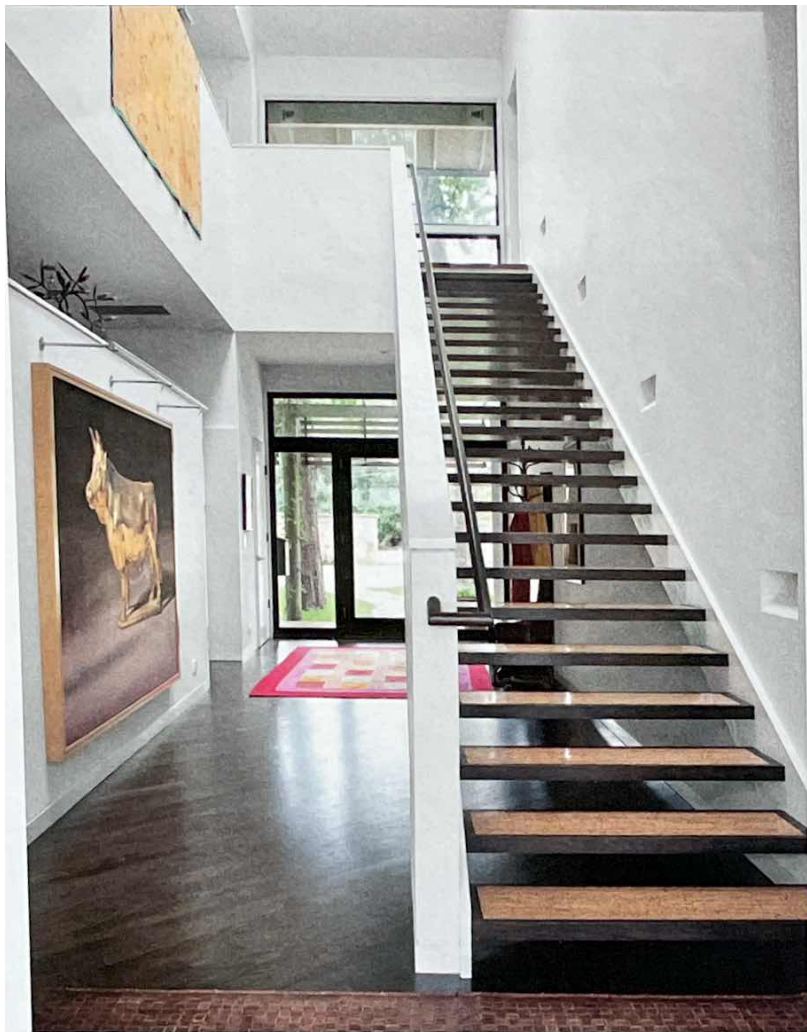
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WHEN IT COMES TO DESIGNING
A HOUSE, ARCHITECT DICK CLARK
KNOWS THE LAY OF THE LAND

By Dana Frank • Photography by Casey Dunn





Linens (far left) are from Feather Your Nest. Welch often sets wood floors on the diagonal to create a sense of dynamism. Designer Blaine Johnson added grass cloth wallpaper and the Duravit sink to make an elegant powder room.

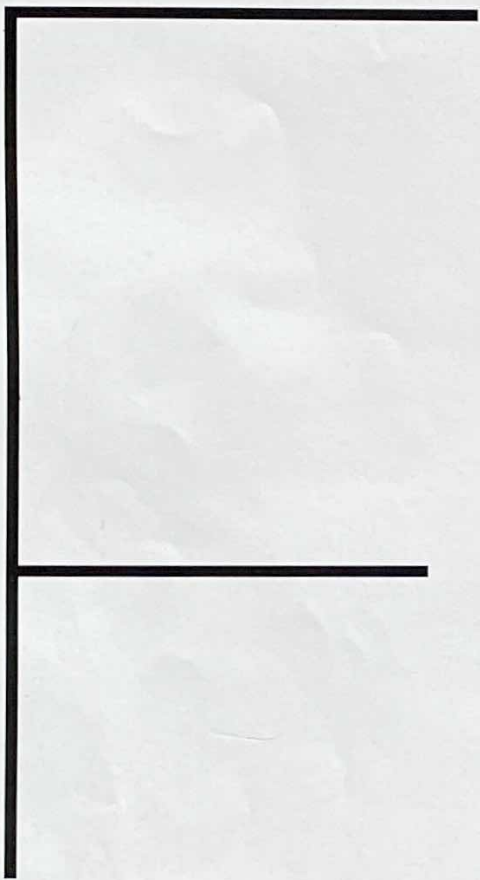


right are the kitchen, dining room and living room. On the left are a cozy study and the garage. Upstairs, the master bedroom overlooks the courtyard and the guest house (“We have a high occupancy rate,” observes Ed wryly).

Natural light was also a driving factor. “I am fascinated by natural light,” admits Welch. Consequently, a skylight presides over the double-height dogtrot and bestows gorgeous light throughout the house, front to back as well as on both upper and lower floors. Welch even planned a way for the light to filter through to the living and dining rooms. “Dad designed a floating bookshelf,” says Liz, “that allows light to drift in over the top.”

Liz and Ed furnished their new house with pieces from their New York apartment, such as a pair of handsome vintage leather museum benches and a humongous granite-topped dining table, plus lots of art by Texas artists such as James Surls and Dan Rizzie. The Tirrells enlisted Chicago interior designer Blaine Johnson to assist. She freshened things up with sisal area rugs and comfy sofas and suggested a calm palette of neutral colors. All efforts must have worked. Both Ed and Liz still travel back to New York for work and pleasure. “But when I get back here,” says Ed, “I exhale and say, ‘Yeah, that’s why we did this. Now I can relax.’” [amh](#)





IVE DENSELY WOODED ACRES IN A WESTLAKE ravine—backed by a vertical canyon wall alongside a creek—equals a building site that only the most creative architect could love. Or, more particularly, that Dick Clark—who designed a house for that lot—would really love. “The land often dictates my designs,” notes Clark. “The slope, those trees—all those had a big impact on my first sketches.”

The approach to the site of the house is precipitous and could easily prompt thoughts similar to those of Clark’s interior design partner, Suzi Dunn, the first time she viewed the lot. “It will be a huge challenge to fit a house in here,” she said. But Clark did fit a house into the landscape, and with such deftness that the ravine and the 6,500-square-foot home look as if they belong together, with room to spare.

Clark’s respect for the land and his skill at negotiating its eccentricities were some of the reasons the homeowners had chosen the architect. Their research was thorough if low-tech. “We drove



The living room windows (previous page) look out onto the dramatic canyon wall. The B & B sofa, coffee table and Penta lamps are from Spazio. Rug is from Edgar Kelly Rugs. In the dining room (below) a custom Solux pendant lights the dining room table and chairs from Spazio. The rug is from Edgar Kelly Rugs.





White oak cabinets throughout the house are custom through Dick Clark Architecture. The black leather Arper barstools are from Spazio and the runner is from Edgar Kelly Rugs. A wall between kitchen and dining room is painted red, a modernist backdrop for the owners' art collection.

through neighborhoods looking for houses we admired," the husband recalls. "We'd even get out of the car and knock on doors to find out if they had used an architect." The couple also identified architects from signs in front of houses under construction. "Then we interviewed three or four architects and chose Dick because we liked him the best."

"Dick sat on the property and spent time here," says one of the homeowners, by way of explaining the architect's method of absorbing information about the climate and terrain. "He created the rooms for the best feel and the best views."

A two-stories-high wall of windows in the main living space fosters the resulting sense of openness in the four-bedroom, four-bath Texas regionalist contemporary home. Clark also took into account the basics: the path of the sun, the prevailing breezes, the location of water and how close the family of four wanted to be to one another. Those issues encouraged serious thinking about what kind of space the homeowners and their two young children needed, both to be together and to be apart. "My husband wanted a house like his aunt and uncle's in the Rio Grande Valley," says the wife, "with a guest house for friends and family to relax



A library is a favorite place to relax on the B & B Italia sofa and chairs from Spazio. The coffee table is a classic Noguchi from Spazio; rug is from Edgar Kelly Rugs.

in.” And the couple remembered features they liked about their house in Albuquerque: “We wanted a lot of light, with no window coverings.”

Clark created three zones, spaces that are separate yet integrated for the family’s lifestyle: the sleeping zone, the formal zone (with the great room and formal dining room), and the living zone, including a casual living space, an eating area and the kitchen. Each volume is sheathed in Texas rough-hewn limestone blocks that wrap interior walls as well. At first the wife wasn’t so sure about all that rock. Now, though, she appreciates the value of the attractive material’s indestructibility, especially when accounting for her growing young children and the family dog. The architect also used a polished version of the same limestone on the floors throughout the house—the rectangular slabs establish an orderly grid that pairs continuity with durability.

In addition, there was the art, which the homeowners had long collected. The pieces are all by New York painters whose heyday was from the fifties to the seventies. “Incorporating the art was a priority,” says Dunn, who chose furnishings to complement the bold shapes and colors in the abstract paintings. Sofas and chairs are in neutral hues, modern in shape but cozy enough to invite lounging. Rugs were selected for their patterns and pops of color, both of which are witty counterpoints to the art on the walls.

The overall color scheme throughout the formal









The master suite overlooks the canyon wall, with clerestory windows for sky-watching. Pillows and linens are custom through Dick Clark Architecture; B & B Italia platform bed, side tables and lamps are from Spazio.

and living spaces is neutral, with bold accents of color. The mostly black dining room—with its round black table and black chairs that echo the smoky machinations of Lawrence Calgagno’s 1971 painting “MacDowell”—becomes something like a set piece you would expect to see in a moody black-and-white film.

The couple purchased nearly all the furniture specifically for the new house. But that doesn’t surprise Dunn. “People edit themselves to make way for the new,” she says. “It’s cathartic.” The wife has her own take on that phenomenon, which she shares with humor: “When I asked Suzi what I could bring to the new house, she took her time, looked around at everything, then pointed to my husband’s grand piano. ‘That,’ she said.” Clark is accustomed to his partner’s honesty and her aesthetic. “Suzi goes to the core,” he says. And the homeowners appreciated it. “She and these folks got along like they’d known each other for 150 years,” says the architect.

Frankness, thorough research by the homeowners and the architect and delight in nature’s drama proved to be a winning combination. The homeowners have a house that suits their family perfectly. And just in case they want to elaborate further on their project, they have recently bought two adjacent tracts of land where Dick Clark can come and sit any time he wants. **amh**