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It Takes a Villa

No maxed out Medi style here! This Preston Hollow house is all clean lines, comfort and a good card game

| By Rebecca Sherman |
| Photography by Justin Clemons and Dan Piassick |

Villa architecture seems an unlikely choice for lovers of contemporary design, but that's just what Lance and Shari Vander Linden had in mind for the exterior of their 9,000-square-foot Preston Hollow abode, completed in 2008. For the interiors, they envisioned big, open rooms furnished with clean, modern pieces that would be comfortable and sturdy enough for three boisterous teenagers and their friends. "We like the villa look, but we also love modern," says Shari. "We wanted a house that was good for entertaining, so flow was important. But the kind of entertaining we do is mostly with family and friends. We didn't need anything formal or stuffy, and we didn't want wasted space."

The Vander Lindens took their ideas to architect Richard Drummond Davis, best known for classic villa style. To make it all come together, Davis knew that the traditional façade had to somehow tie into the contemporary interior aesthetic. "We automatically made the exterior more austere, simple and unornamented. We left off the frou-frou," says Davis, who worked with contractor Barry Buford of Buford Builders, Inc., to build the house from smooth-cut Texas limestone, which provides a clean, crisp look. Carved, decorative cornices and entablatures found in most villa-style architecture were omitted. The arches are without keystones or plinth blocks, and the porches without decorative trim. Instead of the ubiquitous cathedral front entry and foyer, Davis lowered the ceiling to human scale, just one story high. "The essence of this house is that it's relaxed and not overworked," he says.

The house was a team effort among Davis and interior designers Robyn Menter and Alicia Quintans, of Robyn Menter Design Associates, Inc., who came into the project from day one. "We got involved in the space planning early with Richard to make

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EMBOLDENED ARCHES! From top: Shari Vander Linden and daughter Hailey in the groin vaulted art gallery. Branch and birds sculpture made of wood blocks is Austin artist Shawn Smith. Basket is by Japanese bamboo artist Yamaguchi Ryouun, mounted on a custom pedestal by Allan Knight and Associates. A collection of mounted, bronzed vertebrae. A small wine cellar off the dining room is made of solid walnut.

FLOWERS BY RUFUS FELIX FLOWERS



AIRY RIGHTS Clockwise from top left: Custom furniture in the family room is covered in indoor/outdoor fabrics in earth tones that are repeated in the covered veranda. The dining room's red vases are from Allan Knight and Associates. Robyn Menter designed custom night stands to go with an Ironies bed from Culp Associates. Richard Serra painting in the family room.



...CONTINUED sure the rooms were large enough for what the family wanted," says Menter, who also brought in lighting consultant Ann Linley to create appropriate lighting for the Vander Linden's growing collection of contemporary art.

A house is not a home until every family member feels comfortable in it. Even the children had their say about what worked and what didn't and were allowed to choose colors and materials for their own rooms. Each family member drew up a short list of must-haves: Lance, 52, an attorney, wanted a gallery space big enough to hold future modern art acquisitions. Jack, 18, a pitcher who will be heading to Georgetown University on a baseball scholarship next fall, requested a pitching mound in the back yard. Shari, 45, wanted a big laundry room with

double washers and dryers and "tons of counter space." Owen, 11, who loves rocks and fossils, got a bathroom tiled in river rocks, and 17-year-old Hailey's wish for a hanging Eero Aarnio bubble chair came true, just in time for move-in and her birthday.

Most of the design requirements were discussed early on, such as the family's desire to have a large kitchen that flowed directly into a large family room, and from there, a large veranda with an outdoor kitchen, dining table and sitting area. They wanted the first level to house the master suite, with the children's rooms and a game room located on the second floor.

To keep the conversation flowing when the children are upstairs, Davis designed a Juliet-

style balcony overlooking the family room. With the view from above in mind, a space-saving custom, curved sofa and custom ottoman with storage were designed and upholstered in washable outdoor fabrics. Menter and Quintans didn't want to clutter the room with too many seating areas, but a card table was a non-negotiable item. Says Shari: "Our family is really big into playing cards and puzzles. My mother taught us girls to play progressive gin, and so my sisters and I have taught our daughters the game. The boys love to play poker." A custom metal and glass table does the trick, with lightweight leather Cab chairs easily moved around for watching TV.

Warm earth tones in oranges, browns and greens are continued from the family room to the outdoor

room to visually connect the two spaces, says Menter. Douglas fir beams and solid walnut doors help warm up the house's white walls and limestone floors. Shari's favorite color is red—it also happens to be one of Menter's—so it was used judiciously throughout to punch up the neutral palette. One of the more dramatic uses of red is in a sculpture by Austin artist Shawn Smith, which they commissioned for a niche in their new groin vaulted gallery. Smith met with the Vander Lindens before coming up with his design, meticulously created from hundreds of small, red wooden blocks forming five fluttering red birds—one for each Vander Linden.

"It was in honor of our family," says Shari. Nothing could have been more appropriate. ■