

# TEXAS ARCHITECT







# Material and Craft

By Kelly Roberson

*Diseñada por Sinclair Black y Andrew Vernooy, está situada en un terreno en declive de un cuarto de acre, en el borde del Lago Austin. El lugar decidió las formas de la residencia, sus terrazas, piscina y casa del bote. Otros factores importantes fueron el uso de materiales locales y el trabajo artesanal.*

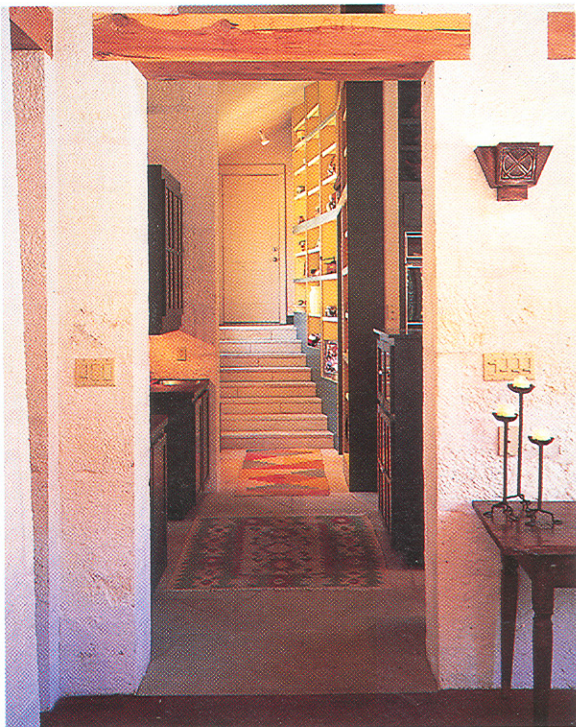
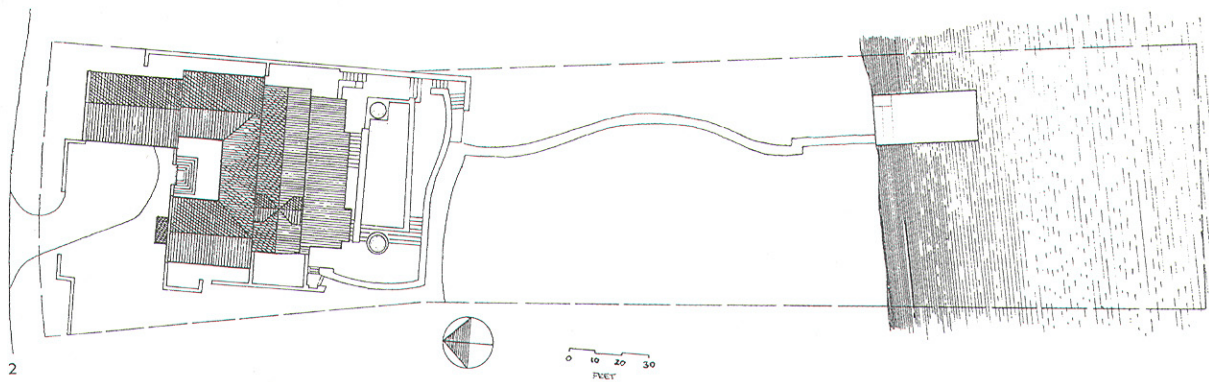
*Exteriores e interiores se mezclan con el uso de los mismos materiales y elementos, como paredes de piedra y detalles mudejares en pisos y ventanas. La casa está dividida en tres niveles y el sentido de apertura al exterior está siempre presente. La residencia May es un éxito en el esfuerzo de resaltar la arquitectura residencial con el buen uso de estética regional y artesanía.*

ON THE NORTHWEST EDGE OF AUSTIN, set amongst the hills at the edge of a new development, is the May residence. Designed by Sinclair Black and Andrew Vernooy, the quietly stated house exhibits care and consideration in its design and use of materials.

The 3400-square-foot house sits on a steeply graded quarter-acre site at the edge of Lake Austin. It was the site, says Sinclair Black, FAIA, that determined the planning of the house and its terraces, pool, and boat house. As each grade stepped down towards the lake, so too followed a level of the house or one of the outdoor spaces. Two other deciding factors in the eventual design, says Black, were the use of local materials and craftsmanship.

Unlike most new residential solutions, the garage, although connected to the north-facing residence, sits to the east side, allowing the house to be the focus of attention. That decision, and the decision to site the house back from the street, adds a welcoming air to the May residence. A partially enclosed entry courtyard begins an effort to make outdoor spaces part of the living space.





On the exterior, limestone walls, mesquite lintels, and a shingled roof, coupled with full-grown trees and the rich hues of well-done landscaping, begin the use of natural materials.

Inside, the house is divided into three levels: a main public living space, a second-level bedroom and office space, and a third-level studio and bedroom space. There is a subtle distinction between different living environments, and therefore of public space from private space. The two spaces are joined by a third-level balcony, which overlooks the living room from the studio.

The May residence is full of attentive solutions to residential programs. The first is the entry hall from the garage to the house. As the site begins to slope, steps follow from the garage to the kitchen. Instead of a blank wall, floor-to-ceiling shelves (another repeating element) fill the hallway. The shelves, painted warm yellow and accented with a deep green, are well-thought-out finishing elements.

Each space and material decision within the house contributes to the continuing design scheme.



1 The May House sits back from the street, surrounded by a small courtyard and full-grown oak trees.

2 The house faces north on the quarter-acre site abutting Lake Austin.

3 A wall of floor-to-ceiling shelves leads from the garage down to the kitchen.

4 The breakfast room looks out onto the back porch.

5 The third level opens over the living room, which repeats the floor-to-ceiling shelves found by the kitchen.

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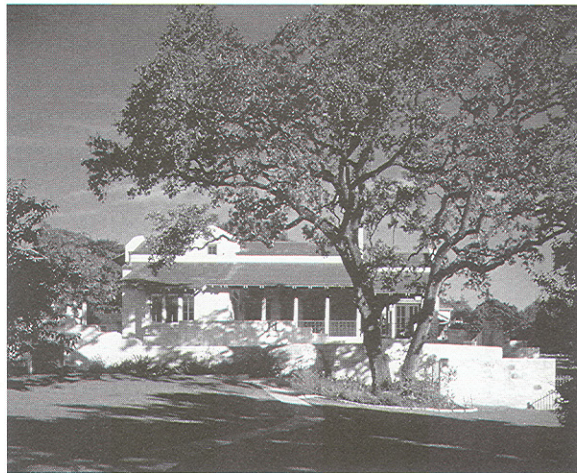
1 The boat house is sited on a quiet bend of the lake.

2 A landscaped yard leads to the boat house.

3 A window in the master suite looks out to the pool.

4 Wall forms and materials repeat in the porch stairs.

5 Tall windows flood the living room with light.



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**PROJECT** *May Residence*  
**ARCHITECT** *Sinclair Black & Andrew Vernooy, Austin (Sinclair Black, FALA, Gregory Thomas, Mell Lawrence)*  
**CLIENT** *Robert and Jeanne May*

**CONTRACTOR** *Dagleish Construction Company*  
**CONSULTANTS** *Jeffrey L. Smith (structural engineering)*  
**PHOTOGRAPHER** *Paul Bardagjy*

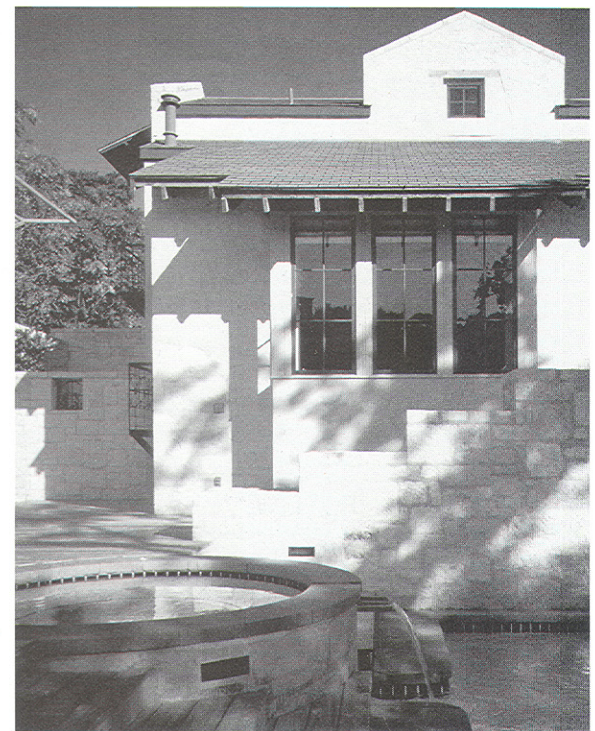
The same exterior materials (limestone walls, mesquite floors and lintels) mix with handcrafted light fixtures, floor-to-ceiling shelves, and a fireplace with a 900-pound stone lintel. In the kitchen, burgundy slate tile counters play off forest green cabinets. The breakfast room encourages residents to come and go from the outside deck; that sense of openness is present throughout house. Warmth exudes in colors, lines, and forms.

When possible, the house takes advantage of the view, orienting residents and visitors outside. By doing so, the designers made the exterior spaces as much a part of the living space as the interior spaces. The large covered back porch, on the same level as the main living spaces, is built from cypress, which will turn gray over time. Limestone steps and half-walls lead to the pool, down another grade from the porch. To the west side (and repeated in the entry court) are large steel trellises that provide the beginnings of shade and privacy.

The path to the boathouse, which repeats the materials and forms of the house, is a quiet, secluded jaunt. The first level, for boat storage, is surrounded by a cypress dock. The upper covered deck has enough space for a larger group to gather and enjoy the Hill Country view.

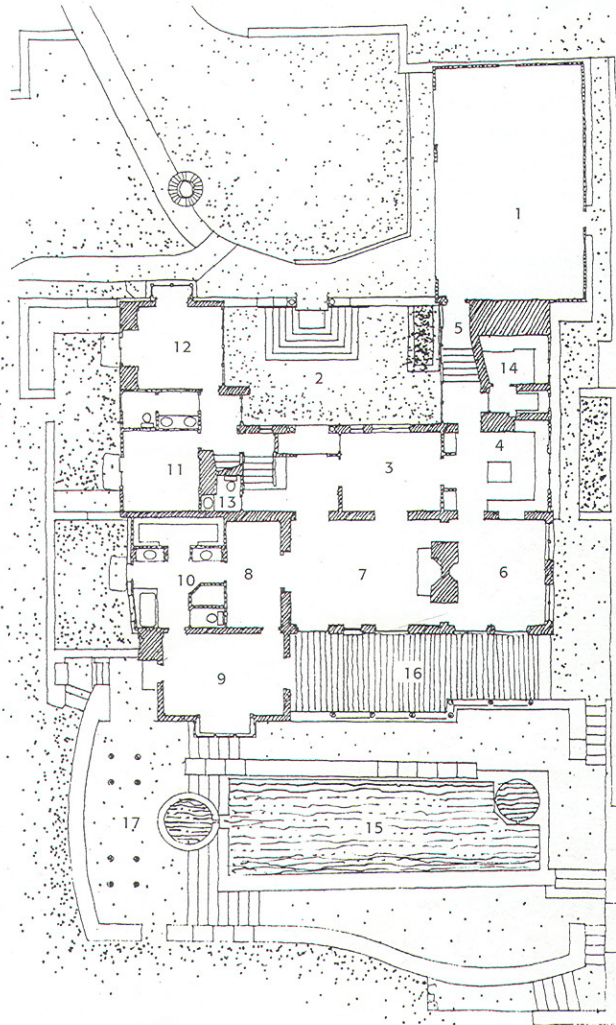
The May residence is a successful effort at distinguishing residential architecture with craft and materiality. With a difficult site, Black and Vernooy enhanced the owner's program and created a gracious, natural solution.

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- FIRST AND SECOND FLOOR PLAN**
- 1 GARAGE
  - 2 ENTRY COURT
  - 3 DINING ROOM
  - 4 KITCHEN
  - 5 GARAGE ENTRY
  - 6 BREAKFAST ROOM
  - 7 LIVING ROOM
  - 8 LIBRARY
  - 9 MASTER BEDROOM
  - 10 MASTER BATHROOM
  - 11 BEDROOM
  - 12 OFFICE
  - 13 BATHROOM
  - 14 UTILITY ROOM
  - 15 POOL
  - 16 DECK
  - 17 TERRACE



**RESOURCES**

Cypress: Texas Kiln Products; stone: Esco; ornamental iron: Evenson Ironworks; lighting: Britt Medford Lighting, Inc.; air conditioning system: Allied Energy; paint & stain: Hill Country Paints, Devoe Paint; structure: Capitol Aggregates; wall surfacing: Esco, Renegade Drywall; windows: Kolbe & Kolbe; skylights: Velux; doors: Kolbe & Kolbe, Eastern Cedar Clad Garage Doors; roofing: GAF; floor surfacing: Esco, Artisan Hardwood Floors; ceilings: Texas Kiln Products, Wampler Manufacturing