

A photograph of a living room with a fireplace, a large window, and a sofa. The room features a fireplace with a brick surround and a white mantel. A large window with a black frame and white curtains offers a view of a green landscape. A beige sofa with several pillows is positioned in the foreground. A high-back armchair and a small table are also visible. The walls are a warm, textured yellow color.

Fresh TEXAS Traditions

Blending Spanish and Italian
elements for a contemporary
Mediterranean look that captures
the spirit of Austin today

photography by Dominique Vorillon
text by Caren Kurlander

"The house has a southern European feel with a modern overlay," says Marcus Mohon of a family's Austin residence he designed. In the living room, custom sofas are upholstered with mohair from Kneeder-Fauchère and leather from Spinneybeck. Edward Ferrell leather covers the daybed, which is accented with nailhead trim. The high-back armchair and lamps are the clients' own Spanish antiques, and the custom wool rug is from Mansour Modern.



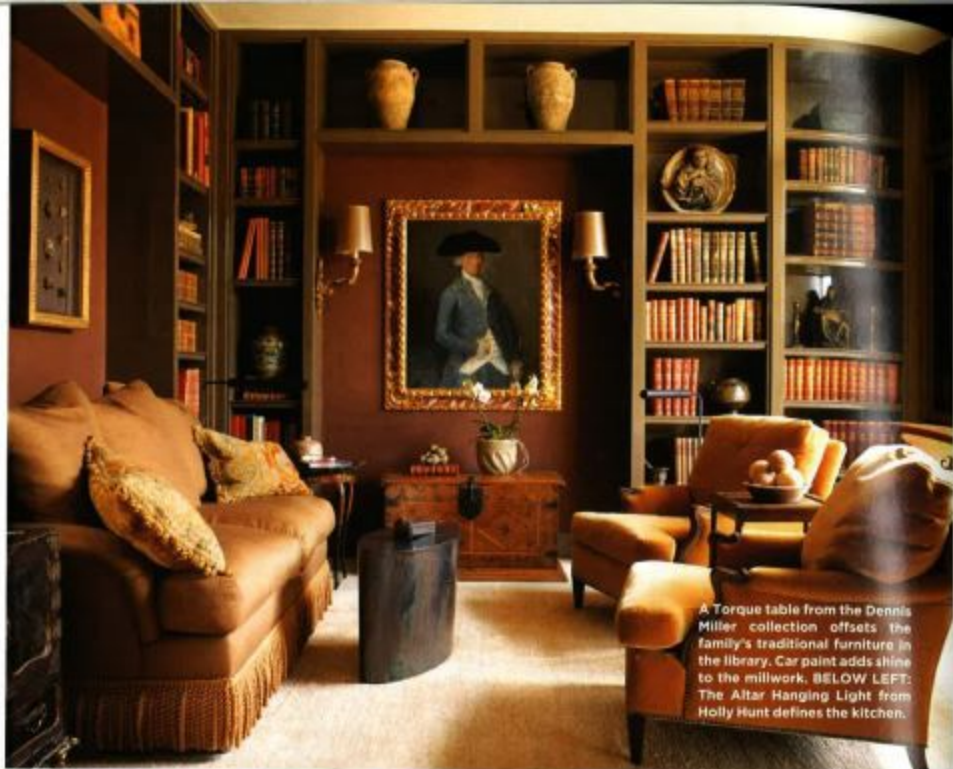
A sheer panel made with a Bergamo fabric creates a subtle divider for the dining room. "As you walk by, you can see through the sheer and enjoy both spaces," says Mohon (below left). Jacobs side chairs from Dessin Fournir's Kerry Joyce Collection surround Dessin Fournir's Sutcliffe Center table. The iron chandelier is from Rose Tarlow-Melrose House. A glass lamp from Donghia stands on the family's eighteenth-century Spanish sideboard. LEFT: Leather folding doors that mimic a screen were designed by Mohon and fabricated by Jean de Merry in Los Angeles to conceal the living room's television.



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 ustin is adventurous," says interior designer Marcus Mohon of the progressive Texas capital, known for its live music, large university and high-tech industry. "People here have an openness for trying new things." This willing state of mind creates a perfect opportunity for Mohon, who partnered with San Antonio-based architect Michael G. Huber to form the firm Mohon-Huber Interiors in 2002, to push the boundaries of his classic-leaning designs. "It's a very laid-back city while still being connected to the rest of the world," says Mohon. "It's sophisticated in a down-home kind of way, and clients in Austin really value good design."

This was certainly true for a project Mohon completed for a family west of Austin. The husband and wife are design aesthetes and knew from the start that authenticity was important to them. "In traditional homes in Europe, the value and the beauty of a home are in the pure design," says the husband. "We wanted it to be understated but elegant." Influenced by the landscape of the Texas Hill Country, which rolls up to the edge of Austin, the house was designed to have a Tuscan feel. Architect Gary Koerner, who originated the concept for the house, drew the schematic to orient the residence on a meandering axis that follows the ridge of the site, and Gary Furman Architects completed the drawings. Mohon and the residents worked out many of the details as the house was being built by Dalgleish Construction Company. The resulting structure, with a limestone exterior and staggered elevations, has a timeworn European look.





A Torque table from the Dennis Miller collection offsets the family's traditional furniture in the library. Car paint adds shine to the millwork. **BELOW LEFT:** The Altar Hanging Light from Holly Hunt defines the kitchen.



Inside, the design took on a more personal perspective. "They had a lot of Spanish antiques but didn't want it to look like a period house," says Mohon. "They also had an art collection of Spanish masters that they'd inherited and modern works that they'd collected together. So we wanted the whole house to reflect that contrast." This mix is most apparent in the living room, where the couple's antique paintings and furnishings are complemented by custom pieces. Two sofas and a daybed have clean, simple profiles, but traditional detailing—nailhead trim on one sofa and a tailored skirt on another—was added to create a dialogue with the ornate older pieces.

"They wanted to be able to use every room in the house," says the designer. "And they wanted it to be comfortable. So in the living room we tried to achieve balance and approachableness rather than formal symmetry." By pulling together an unconventional seating arrangement of two sofas, a daybed and a sampling of chairs anchored by a Mansour

Mohon designed an EIGHT-FOOT-TALL SCREEN that stands behind the bed and wraps around the outer edge of the side tables to CREATE AN ENVELOPING VOLUME within the master bedroom.



"They wanted a dynamic quality," says Mohon. "When you walk into the master bedroom, the screen creates a vestibule. You can walk around it on both sides to get to the bed and the seating area." Mohon designed the screen and had it upholstered with Fabricut's Palmer fabric. An antique lamp stands on the Mohon-designed side table. A Dutch writing table is paired with a chair from Dessin Poulain's Kerry Joyce Collection.

Modern ring, Mohon created a dynamic, livable room instead of a stiff showplace. Some furniture is pulled away from the walls to make the big space feel more intimate, and instead of a heavy low table, Mohon placed several small ottomans and side tables near the sofas and chairs so that the family could easily move pieces around to put up their feet or rest a drink nearby. "I think it's comfortable because not any one element dominates the room," says Mohon, who worked within a monochromatic ivory palette and kept an emphasis on texture over pattern. "Neutral colors are more our personality," says the wife. "It's less tiring for us through the years, and we wanted richness with restraint."

Mohon kept a calm palette throughout and continued working with easy shifts between styles. Antique Spanish doors open to a kitchen with modern millwork, and the library's shelves are coated with glossy car paint as a sleek foil to the uplighted walls and traditional furnishings. The design constantly vibrates between classic and contemporary and never feels flat, which is also due to the unexpected touches added by Mohon. "The dining room is a transition space, but we wanted to give it a psychological separation," says Mohon, who designed a sheer panel to hang near the table, defining the space without isolating it. "It's the modern echo of a tapestry," says the designer, who paired a round dining table from Desain Fournir and chairs from the company's Kerry Joyce Collection.

Mohon also experimented with space in the master bedroom. He designed an eight-foot-tall screen that stands behind the bed and wraps around the outer edge of the side tables to create an enveloping volume within the room. "The room is huge, but we wanted it to seem human-scale," says Mohon, who uplighted the screen with the same fabric used for the headboard and bed skirt to create a seamless look. A seating area at the foot of the bed takes in the panoramic landscape through a large window.

"It feels like you're on the edge of a wilderness, but you're just outside the metropolitan area," says Mohon. The house lies in the balance of country and city, classic and contemporary, and it thrives there. "Normally Texas is more traditional. If someone is building a European-type house, they'll furnish it that way. This one is kind of a fusion. It's Austin fusion." 4

DESIGN DETAILS: NEO-MEDITERRANEAN STYLE



ANTIQUE LAMPS were given MODERN DRUM SHADES TO play up the contrast within the furnishings.



Mohon accented streamlined contemporary furnishings with TRADITIONAL NAILHEAD TRIM as a way to link them to the family's antiques.

"There are a lot of bad wanna-be Tuscan houses," says Mohon. "So we wanted the MATERIALS AND THE CONSTRUCTION TO BE VERY AUTHENTIC." Only these local craftsmen worked on the structure's exterior limestone, and every stone was dressed by hand.



The Jacobs side chair from Desain Fournir's Kerry Joyce Collection "has classic lines but a MODERN ATTITUDE," says Mohon, who used six as dining chairs.



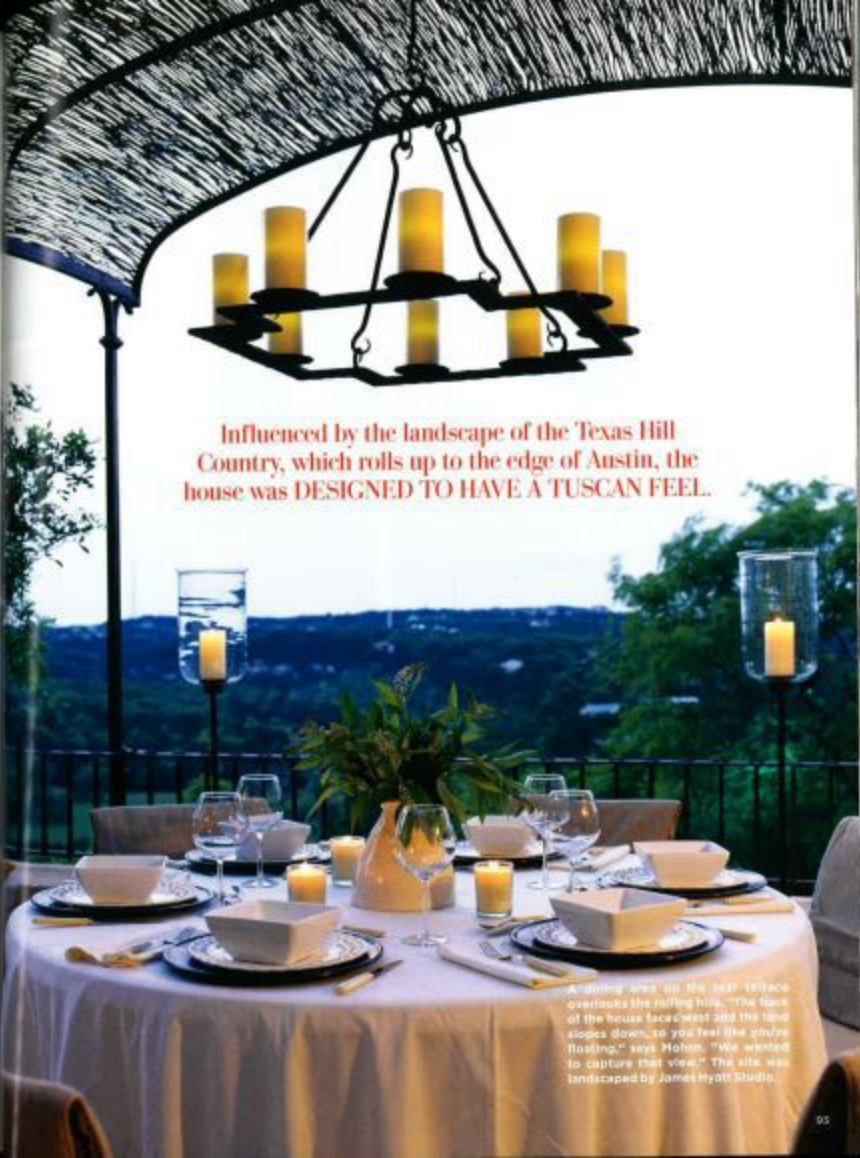
A SHEER FABRIC PANEL provides visual separation in the dining room without closing it off entirely.



"I designed the FOLDING DOORS TO LOOK LIKE AN OLD SPANISH SCREEN," says Mohon of the inventive way he concealed the television. "We didn't want it to look like something hiding the TV."



"The older artworks have antique frames," says Mohon. "So we tried to stay in the same vein throughout the house." Even in the contemporary master bath, where the fixtures are polished nickel, he hung a mirror with an ORNATE GILDED FRAME "to throw things off."



Influenced by the landscape of the Texas Hill Country, which rolls up to the edge of Austin, the house was DESIGNED TO HAVE A TUSCAN FEEL.

Another view on the rear terrace overlooks the rolling hills. "The back of the house faces west and the land slopes down, so you feel like you're floating," says Mohon. "We wanted to capture that view." The site was landscaped by James Hyatt Studio.