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ATTUNED TO NATURE

BODRON/FRUIT HARNESS A NARROW, WOODED, CREEK-SIDE LOT ALONG A LAKE TO DESIGN THREE-STORY PERFECTION.

BY ROB BRINKLEY
PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEPHEN KARLISCH

A home designed by Bodron/Fruit features bevel shell stone exteriors, Douglas fir siding and soffit, and Indiana grey limestone on the terrace. On the right a white-marble sculpture by Jaume Plensa titled *Rose's World II*, 2021, is installed.

“But where will you put the house?” Friends just couldn’t fathom where on the long, thin, tapered, lot — shaped rather like a golf tee—a new house could possibly go. Peppered with large trees and sloping from the street down to a neighborhood lake, the narrow sliver may have seemed more like a side yard than a buildable lot for an entire dream house for a couple of empty nesters.

That’s okay. The nesters were in no hurry. They were living just one street over and had been for about 25 years, raising their family. They did visit their lot often, just to imagine that new house and have a glass of wine by that gleaming lake, where the occasional canoe gliding by is the only traffic to speak of. (Besides, the husband was having far too much fun occasionally tugging a wagon full of drinks the 600 feet from the house to the lot, then texting his friends: “Come over. I’m at my ranch.”)

All the while, Dallas architect Svend Fruit was behind the scenes, quite excited. Fruit and his business partner, interior designer Mil Bodron, had suggested the lot to the couple as an alternative to their firm, Bodron/Fruit, renovating the couple’s longtime home—a perfectly serviceable 1980s traditional—or buying a different house altogether. The nature-loving husband and wife fell in love with the lot’s woodland aura, a mere three miles from Central Expressway,



Svend Fruit designed a three-story stacked home to work within the lot’s small footprint.



Six archival pigment photographs from German artist Kathrin Linkerdorff's *Faeries II* series make an elegant statement. To the left hangs Linda Ridgway's bronze sculpture *And a masked moon had spread down campers rays*, 2019. Mil Sedron covered the 1950s vintage lounge chairs from the Czech Republic in Kvadrat fabric. Joseph Jeup's Union cocktail table in Gibraltar Gray on walnut from Bright Group, Dallas, features a greige crosshatch linen finish. Living Divani sofa through Scott + Cooner; Elan Atelier Arch rectangular side table in Boxen bronze through Sutherland; Merino rug through Holland & Sherry.



Linda Ridgway, *Whose Emerald Nest The Ages Spin*, 2021, bronze, 24k-gold leaf sculpture; and *An evening line seeking its source*, 2019, bronze, hang on opposite sides of the André Arbus vintage dining table in limed oak through Unforget, Belgium. Mattalano Motto armless dining chairs in wood and leather through Holly Hunt, with a Fortuny inset panel through Sutherland. Custom drapery in Great Plains fabric through Calvin Brooks Design.



James Surt's *Eighteen Flowers*, 2022, a basswood and steel commissioned wall sculpture, embraces the natural setting; a pair of Roman Thomas Preston chairs in American walnut with nailhead finish covered in Rogers & Goffigan fabric add texture to the seating arrangement. At the entrance, the *Untitled*, 2020, ceramic, Japanese lacquer, and copper coil sculpture is by Kazunori Hamana in collaboration with Yukiko Kuroda. The door and ceiling are combed Douglas fir wood.



Carl Hansen & Son CH71 walnut lounge chairs covered in fabric from Designtex through Design Within Reach; walnut coffee table in black lacquer through Woodsport, Minnesota; Nasiri custom rug in Mazandaran flatweave is through Nasiri, New York; Artifort leather Mood chairs through Scott + Cooner surround the breakfast table. Viccarbe Aleta counter stools in Elmossft leather, through Scott + Cooner, line the island. The kitchen features white-oak cabinetry, and the island cabinets and backsplash are in stainless steel with white Macaubas quartzite counter tops.



Vik Muniz's archival photograph *Christina's World*, after Andrew Wyeth, 2023, hangs above a Victor desk by Lema from Haute Living, Chicago with a Quintis desk chair, Adam Otlewski desk lamp, and a Lawson-Fenning custom cabinet. Helen Frankenthaler's *Untitled*, 2001, acrylic on paper, is installed at the top of the staircase. A Halabala 1930s lounge chair from the Czech Republic through Morentz, Netherlands, is upholstered in Holland & Sherry fabric next to the Kathy Kuo faux shagreen Darren coffee table.



The Molteni&C Asterias dining table from Urban Space Interiors, surrounded by Artifort leather Mood chairs from Scott + Cooner, offers a view of the backyard and James Surls, *Eighteen Flowers*, 2022.

complete with a wide creek that burbles along one whole side. They wanted their new house to relate to all of it, Fruit says, and they wanted to keep as many trees as they could, so he devised a plan: “We stacked the house. The footprint needed to be as small as possible.” In its resulting three stories, Fruit packed three bedrooms, six baths, a two-story living room, a den, a kitchen, a dining room, a salon/office for the wife and an office/listening room for the husband, who loves his connoisseur audio systems and his country and classical music. There are porches, decks and terraces that jut here and there—into the trees, over the creek, over a pool. Gargantuan windows slide or pivot, opening the house to trees, breezes, and views. It is a permeable, precision assemblage of fir, fossilized limestone, copper, steel, and glass—a sleek shelter in these in-town woods.

It is also a vessel for a cerebral collection of furnishings. Bodron kept the palette quiet but turned up the textures—think thick rugs, nubby fabrics, matte leathers. “The clients wanted a contemporary interior that wasn’t too modern or slick,” he says, and that mission was accomplished with a very specific vibe that Bodron divined: “Modern Texas regional meets Americana.” He has mixed both sleek and soft-edged contemporary pieces that evoke a crafted feeling, and he has stirred in some vintage European pieces, too. For the living room, he discovered a pair of 1950s lounge chairs from the Czech Republic “that act like comfy wingback chairs.” In the dining room, a 1950s table in limed oak and designed by the revered André Arbus “looks somewhat like a French farm table,” Bodron says, “but with soft, modernist detailing.” Otherwise, almost all of the furnishings are of the moment—but they subtly



nod to more traditional classics. Even some of the rugs get in on the act: Their mottles, speckles, and textures evoke the handmade rag rugs of pioneer and colonial homes. “It’s all Mil,” says the husband of the house’s furnishings. Precious few pieces from the previous house came over. (“The old stuff never fits a new house,” Bodron says, speaking from experience.)

Another area in which best to start from scratch was the art. With the kids grown and gone, the house could be whatever the couple wished. Enter Michael E. Thomas, the longtime Dallas-based art advisor whose clients live around the world. (He’s been advising one for 41 years and counting. “When I go to work for someone,” he says, “it’s for the rest of their lives.”) Thomas and Bodron have been friends for 30 years and have worked together on several projects, so Bodron introduced Thomas to the homeowners about halfway through the construction phase. “I met them and fell in love,” Thomas says of the jovial, storytelling couple, whose big personalities and eagerness to learn appealed to the astute advisor.

He quickly determined one thing: “They are *so* attuned to nature.” That observation set an idea in motion—that the works collected could also reference nature, much like the flora found right outside the couple’s glassy twist on a treehouse. The first piece acquired was a bronze branch with a nest, by Dallas-based Linda Ridgway.

A Ridgway commission followed; now there are four of her works in the house, and the couple plans to focus further on Ridgway—known for her bronze wall reliefs that address femininity, tradition, and domesticity—on Thomas’ advice. In the double-height living room, more works referencing nature face off across the space. Six large photographs by German artist Kathrin Linkersdorff fill one wall. They are from her *Fairies* series of portraits of dried tulips, wherein she extracts much of the flowers’ pigments then suspends them in a liquid medium, where their petals unfurl and their delicate structures are almost transparent, like X-rays. Opposite is a monumental, wall-filling work by Texas native James Surls, a commission suggested by Thomas. It, too, references flowers, with its rough-hewn, burned-wood petals sprouting from dark-painted steel stems.

Another compelling piece is a human representation outside. It is a large-scale, exaggeratedly elongated white marble bust of a young woman titled *Rose’s World II* by Spanish artist Jaume Plensa, the first living artist to have had an exhibition at the Nasher Sculpture Center. It is the husband’s favorite work. “I *really* wanted that,” he says—followed quickly by a good-natured clarification from his wife. “Unless my husband and I *both* like a piece, we don’t get it.” **P**



Above: The terrace features Indian grey limestone and Douglas fir siding and soffit. On the veranda, Tribu’s Nodi dining armchairs in wenge and linen rope and Dolce Vita aluminum dining table through Janus et Cie offer sweeping views of the property. Kettal’s landscape club chairs in manganese and rope through Smink offer additional seating. Below: A terrace offers a serene overlook.



Embracing the natural surroundings, the home features bevel shell stone walls, siding and soffit in Douglas fir, and roofing and fascia in copper metal. The Richard Schultz 1966 chaise lounge in bronze is through Knoll with Kylix side tables through Janus et Cie. Landscape by Mesa Design Group, lighting by Byrdwaters Design, and custom builder Steven Hill all expertly realized the vision of this residence with Bodron/Fruit.