

HOME DESIGN

'Texas' style fits well in Montrose

By Madeleine McDermott Hamm
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A wide foyer opens into the kitchen on the right.

Fresh ideas often arrive with fresh faces, eager newcomers untarnished by years of being told, "You can't do that." Fortunately for young San Antonio architect Camilo Parra, his first residential clients were ready for something different.

Parra wanted to blend the best of several worlds in the exterior architecture, while designing the interior around the clients' lifestyle. They had lived in Central and South America before moving to the Houston area. Attracted to the lively urban setting of the Montrose district, they purchased a cor-



Hester / Hardaway photos

Traditional design softens the clean, contemporary lines of the open interiors. The living room opens into the foyer and staircase.



Camilo Parra designed this three-story house so it would blend into its Montrose neighborhood.



An upstairs home office with a balcony is the wife's "treehouse retreat." The room features built-in shelves and cabinets.

ner lot and demolished the abandoned house.

The challenge, Parra explains, was to create a style that would "stand out yet not intrude into the neighborhood." Architecture in the Montrose area ranges from turn-of-the-century mansions and 1920s bungalows to low-rent apartments and modern townhouses.

Inspired by the diversity, Parra felt free to blend several influences into what he calls "Texas architecture."

The metal roofs recall Texas barns and are similar to the eaves on neighborhood bungalows. The broad front and back porches can be seen on houses throughout the area, as can the smaller third story. A stucco exterior and wood-framed windows reflect the contemporary Southwest.

Towering oak trees guard the

house as if it had always been there. A fence of stucco columns and wrought iron gives a sense of privacy without completely separating the front of the house from the street.

Inside, Parra maintains a sophisticated, city edge in the comfortable, open spaces. A seemingly backward plan places a wide foyer at the rear of the house.

Like many older houses in the area, the front door opens directly into the living room, with a generous porch taking the place of an entry. However, because the garage connects to the back of the house and the back yard contains a large pool and cabana, the back door is the everyday entrance. The foyer acts as a hub, opening onto all the downstairs spaces, including the kitchen, and the wide staircase.

Parra's clean, contemporary

interior architecture pays homage to arts and crafts styling, with rich wood detailing and Brazilian cherry floors and doors. White walls are the background for the clients' eclectic tastes: paintings from South America, Oriental furniture in the foyer, classic French in the living room and Italian baroque for dining.

The centerpiece of the foyer is a green crystal sculpture by Salvador Dali atop a round antique table. On the right, the foyer flows into the kitchen, where the cherry-finish cabinetry, dark-granite countertops and stainless-steel details continue the informal elegance of the rest of the downstairs. The handsome space accommodates daily dinners, weekend gourmet cooking and guests who always gather in the kitchen.

Each of the busy owners wanted a home office. His is downstairs, adjoining the foyer, in the middle of any activity. Parra created a more private, upstairs "treehouse retreat" for her. Although small, the room features a wall of built-in shelves and cabinets, a big window and a private balcony, all surrounded by huge oak trees — the perfect hideaway in the city.

Parra is now with Davis ■ Durand-Hollis ■ Rupe Architects, a commercial design firm in San Antonio. He's placed future residential design plans on hold, keeping his ideas fresh for the next time.

Madeleine McDermott Hamm is the Chronicle's home design editor.