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Julius Shulman
Life Through the Lens

John Rodgers's house in the West University Place neighborhood of Houston, Texas, is white, inside and out. "My mother saw it and said, 'It looks like a hospital!'" the single 46-year-old recalls with a subversive hint of pleasure. But an antiseptic, dispassionate bachelor pad it isn't: Rodgers and his architect (and long-lost friend) Price Harrison purposely built a blank canvas to frame his furniture and art collection, which includes pieces by pillars of modernism, from Ellsworth Kelly and Le Corbusier to Robert Motherwell.

Rodgers and Harrison, who went to boarding school together in Bell Buckle, Tennessee, reunited over the design of the house. "The thing that John did, which is unusual, is that he really educated himself in the process of building a house," says Harrison. Clearly, the two had compatible visions. The white-on-white of the concrete stucco, limestone walls, and marble window caps is a clean break from the aesthetic they grew up with in Tennessee. And because everything's bigger in Texas, including storms, steel moment frames—as used

in skyscrapers—were put in around the large, one-inch-thick windows to resist hurricane-force winds. In a small house of so much glass, thunderstorms become IMAX feature presentations.

While it may sound like the ideal life, Rodgers sums up the process with a proverb: "You have to go through hell before you get to heaven." Just finding a lot took two years: "The builders here grab them, and throw up their three-story glimpse at glory." During planning, an architectural review committee objected to a cantilever over the garage, saying it didn't "add integrity to the neighborhood." Then the first builder embezzled money. By the time his home was nearly finished in 2006, Rodgers needed surgery, resulting in a titanium plate and six screws in his neck—one for every year the house was in planning and construction. Despite the strife, what matters now is that it's done, ready for Rodgers, friends, and increasingly friendly neighbors to enjoy. As Rodgers puts it, "The neighbors are realizing that although my house might look different, I'm not so different." ■

Nights in White Stucco

