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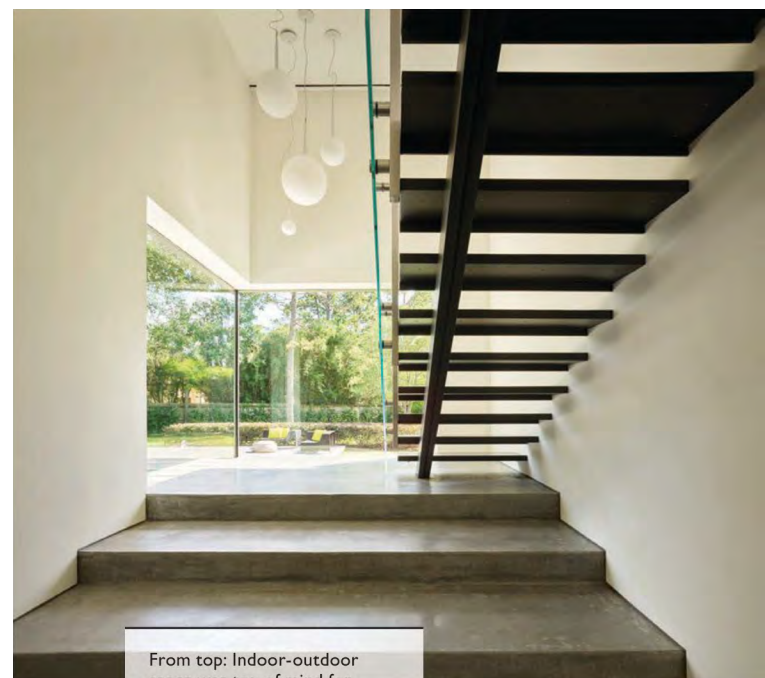
When a pair of design-minded Houstonians set out to build their dream home, they called on West Coast architecture firm EYRC to nail a new kind of California modernism—right here in Houston.

By Mimi Faucett Trahan // Photography by Matthew Millman

When Houstonians Stefan Kreuzer and Barbara Schroeder and their two children set out to find their forever home, it was hard to know where to begin. “We started looking at a few houses in Houston, but nothing was quite what we had in mind,” says Schroeder. The couple has a European sensibility and craved an indoor-outdoor lifestyle. They also have a bit of design savvy, professing to a few shelter magazine subscriptions—which is where they came across L.A.-based Ehrlich Yanai Rhee Chaney Architects (eyrc.com). “Every time we looked in a magazine and liked something, we saw it was by EYRC,” says the homeowner, citing the firm’s

“classic, sort of contemporary” aesthetic. So they decided to begin with a blank slate: They purchased a lot in the Memorial Oaks area and, with the help of Steven Ehrlich and Takashi Yanai, built their dream home.

The two-year design process began with the couple heading to California to tour a few of the architects’ prolific residential projects. Their love affair with EYRC’s brand of West Coast modernism was affirmed as they saw indoor-outdoor living spaces, clean, modern lines, light-filled open plans and more. The collaboration continued with plenty of site visits south, and a particularly extensive questionnaire for the homeowners.



From top: Indoor-outdoor space was top of mind for homeowners Stefan Kreuzer and Barbara Schroeder; the staircase begins with three concrete amphitheater steps, then continues with black steel treads and glass.



Clockwise from left: The idyllic master suite was intentionally placed on the ground level so the couple didn't have to negotiate with stairs in their senior years; the double-height living room and kitchen is the heart of the home; floor-to-ceiling pivot doors in the dining and entertaining areas open to the pool courtyard.



“Steven and Takashi were very interested to know who we were as people, both professionally and personally, and how we balance our lives,” said Schroeder. Kreuzer, who is a surgeon here in town, added: “Steven actually spent a day at my operating room!”—which the architect called “the ultimate carpentry.”

As Kreuzer and Schroeder were already drawn to the EYRC style, it was up to the architects to adapt that aesthetic to the homeowners’ lifestyle—and to Houston. Humidity and rain had to be considered when designing the extensive indoor-outdoor spaces, for which the architects worked with Chip Trageser of local landscape architecture firm OJB. The architects incorporated floating horizontal roof planes with deep overhangs to mitigate the Texas sun and Houston’s heavy rains. There was a learning curve for everyone involved, says Kreuzer, praising builder Kurt Lobpries of Builders West Inc. for picking up Ehrlich and Yanai’s unique vision.

In keeping with the environmental focus, the composition features large expanses of glass alternating with masses of

Texas limestone; the glazed spaces are for living, while the enclosures contain service elements, like bathrooms and storage. The heart of the four-bedroom, 4 ½-bathroom home is certainly the double-height great room, which encompasses the living room, dining area and kitchen. “We now always feel connected to one another,” says Schroeder of the open plan, noting that there is only one traditional door in the entire house—the rest are pocket doors.

The lot lent itself to a more secluded entrance—a rarity in our city—and something the homeowners didn’t even know they wanted. “We wanted to create a layered experience, taking them from their busy work lives to their sanctuary,” says Yanai. “It wasn’t about announcing yourself to the neighborhood, but much more about creating a private realm for friends and family.” The homeowners concur, as they, their children and their pup take full advantage of roomy green space and the zero-edge pool and private pool house, from which they can take in the view of their new home. “We don’t see ourselves moving out,” says Schroeder. “It’s our dream home.” ■

