



LIGHTENING UP

When interior designer Kristen Nix moved her young family from Houston to Austin, she wasn't necessarily looking for a project. But one beckoned — a three-story, 4,000-square-foot, four-bedroom, four-and-a-half-bath home that Nix brought out of the shadows into a whole new life.

By Julie Catalano Photography courtesy of Meredith Tankersley



Built in the 1960s on a luxuriant lot in Central Austin, the house “is almost like a treehouse,” says Nix, founder and president of Kristen Nix Interiors in Austin. “My goal was to make it peaceful and serene; a nest-like haven to come home to.”

Thankfully, the house didn’t need much renovation, just a reimagining that would forever banish the ubiquitous dark woods and make the most of its abundant windows and glorious natural light. “The one thing that was hard for me was that the house was so dark and yet it had so much light,” recalls Nix. “When we lightened the walls, it was even more magnificent.” White oak flooring helped, too, present throughout except in the carpeted bedrooms.

Due to elevation changes on the 20,000-square-foot lot, the home’s entry is on the second level where the main living area shares the floor with the kitchen, dining room, office, children’s bedrooms and powder room. The lower level holds the playroom and guest room. The master suite occupies the top level.

The living area centerpiece is a custom sectional sofa by The Joseph Company in Houston, in Mokum fabric in Amalfi Sea Salt. A chrome and glass coffee table is from Mirak Furniture in Houston. A Stark area rug defines and softens the space.

The spacious kitchen required the most effort (“we redid

the whole kitchen,” says Nix). For that, she brought in her longtime friend and colleague Carlie Blandford of CB Crafted Homes in Austin — a “fantastic” contractor who opened up the kitchen to add a bar, breakfast area and small office nearby. “We’re a good team,” says Nix. Kitchen countertops are white Caesarstone®, honed for extra durability. The range hood is statuary marble from Levantina. Island barstools are from Palecek. The distinctive black metal star on the island counter is a favorite gift from Nix’s mother, also a designer.

The family room near the kitchen provides soothing accents of soft blues and grays in chairs by Noir with Robert Allen fabric, a custom sofa upholstered in Perennials indoor/outdoor fabric that is stain-, fade- and mildew-resistant, and a custom gray ottoman in Jab fabric. The area rug is from CDC Carpets + Interiors in Austin (“polypropylene and indestructible,” says Nix). All are set against shiplap walls painted in Sherwin-Williams® Natural Tan. Artwork is by contemporary American artist Deborah Dancy, a longtime favorite of Nix.

With no separate formal dining room, the dining area is most notable for its two unique and sophisticated elements: the swag-style white glass Zodiac Lantern by Circa Lighting in antique burnished brass that features all the signs of the zodiac, and a distinctive abstract artwork by Donald Fulton. The family loves outdoor living as much as indoor: A table and





chairs and other seating on the main level deck serves as a frequent grilling and dining spot. Nix spends as much time as possible in her vegetable and flower gardens near the pool.

The elegant powder room off the kitchen has a vanity made of the same veined statuary marble as the kitchen range hood, a perfect complement to the gray geometric wallpaper in Nomad grasscloth by Phillip Jeffries. “The sink was a splurge from Fixtures and Fittings in Houston,” says Nix of the gold basin and faucets.

A children’s bedroom in bright blues with Schumacher wallpaper in Deconstructed Stripe features custom twin beds by The Joseph Company in Houston with custom bedding by Leontine Linens. A second children’s room has white wood bunk beds from Restoration Hardware and ample white wood built-ins for games and toys. The antique 48-star American flag under glass was a find at the Round Top Antiques Fair.

The colorful lower level playroom has a one of a kind coffee table atop an antelope patterned rug by CDC Carpets + Interiors, with a whimsical white rattan hanging chair by Serena and Lily. A nearby guest room welcomes overnight guests. The overhead fixture is by Kelly Wearstler for Circa Lighting. Bedside metal lamps are by Baker.

The crowning glory of the house is the third story master suite, where the treehouse effect Nix spoke of earlier is



in full bloom. “It’s just beautiful,” says Nix of the natural light that streams through two of the walls that are full windows. The master bath got a refresh with new silver travertine tile floor, new mirror, lights and hardware.

Through it all Nix kept an open mind about the house — a helpful trait especially when it came time to deciding about adding a fireplace to the main living area (“I didn’t want expensive venting in the back,” she says.) The Ecosmart ventless clean-burning bio-ethanol fireplace from Churchill’s Fireside & Patio in Austin was the perfect solution and a stunning ultra-contemporary focal point. “We have loved it,” says Nix. “It has no soot, no smoke and is very low maintenance.” One of her favorite artworks by Texas artist McKay Otto hangs overhead.

Nix could not be happier with the result of the six-month project, both practically and aesthetically. The house was carefully and smartly opened up to give Nix the expansive retreat she envisioned while still keeping it simple and unstuffy for everyday living by using durable, long-lasting materials in a largely monochromatic color scheme. “This works well for our family,” she says. “I wanted it to be peaceful and I feel like it is. For me, that was a big part of lightening things up.” ♦

KRISTEN NIX INTERIORS

713-569-0861 | www.kristennixinteriors.com