



WHY THIS SPACE WORKS

Designer Spotlight: Debbie Baxter

By MAURI ELBEL | Photography by MICHAEL HUNTER

DEBBIE BAXTER OF BAXTER DESIGN GROUP BELIEVES INTERIOR DESIGN IS A RESPONSE TO THE ARCHITECTURE AND OCCUPANTS OF THE SPACES. “THAT BEING SAID, I TRY TO WORK TO MAKE LIVING SPACES BEAUTIFUL AND WELL CURATED,” SAYS BAXTER. “MY FAVORITE PROJECTS ARE THOSE DONE WITH TALENTED ARCHITECTS LIKE ROY BRASWELL BECAUSE I KNOW THE BONES ARE GREAT AND THE PROPORTIONS AND THE SCALE ARE LUXURIOUS.” THIS FAMILY HOME, TUCKED INSIDE ONE OF SAN ANTONIO’S OLDER, ICONIC NEIGHBORHOODS, SERVES AS TESTAMENT OF BAXTER’S ABILITY TO HARMONIOUSLY MARRY DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE. BAXTER WAS PART OF THE ORIGINAL HOME’S DESIGN 14 YEARS AGO AND HAS ASSISTED THIS FAMILY WITH VARIOUS INTERIOR PROJECTS OVER THE YEARS. WHEN THE CLIENTS RECENTLY DECIDED TO ADD A POOL HOUSE, THE SAN ANTONIO-BASED DESIGNER WAS STANDING BY TO HELP. AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THIS PROJECT FROM THE GROUND UP, BAXTER HAS ONCE AGAIN HELPED TO CREATE A SPACE THAT HAS REMAINED IN TUNE WITH THE HOME’S EXISTING ARCHITECTURE WHILE SERVING AS A FUNCTIONAL, MULTI-PURPOSE ADDITION THAT SUITS THE NEEDS OF A GROWING FAMILY.

Please provide a bit of background behind this home and the more recent pool house addition.

DB: I worked on this San Antonio project with Roy Braswell when this couple built their home 14 years ago. This pool house addition was designed recently to accommodate their growing family’s needs, and yet, it required strict adherence to the architectural style of the main home. I still have the hard copy of the husband’s main house budget for construction and interiors because he had done his due diligence in determining the costs and they stuck to it. I was impressed that someone had taken the time to access what it would cost to build a home with such realistic expectations. They took the time to realize those expectations over the years; they didn’t just do this all at once. It took these homeowners the full 15 years to realize their dream home.

Looking at the completed project, how do you define this space and what elements really help speak to its overall feel?

DB: There is a great vibe between the architectural materials which are hand-hewn and very regional and the juxtaposition of our more youthful, modern furniture. It seems to say “this building may look vintage but the occupants are young, vibrant and full of energy.” I love that the building looks strong and fortress-like — a protector of the inhabitants from the hot Texas sun and other natural elements.

There is a nice contrast of materials at play throughout the pool house — please tell us about the wood ceilings, stonework and the finishes.

DB: The marriage of materials is signature for Roy Braswell.

He uses them so well with the great punctuations of big panes of glass which let in the natural light. The stone is Lueders limestone. The wood ceilings and beams are Douglas fir. And the backsplash tile is from Redondo Tiles and Stone in San Antonio while the countertops are from Delta Granite and Marble, Inc.

What drew you to the interesting side and center tables situated around the L-shaped sofa in the exterior covered space of the pool house?

DB: I am always on “the hunt” — editing the vast global chain of resources, both new and vintage. I have my chest of treasured artisans and collectors I team up with for the perfect additions to any space. In this case, everything had to be suitable for a non-climatized space that is somewhat open to the elements.

I love the flow of this space — the way the outdoor courtyard area seamlessly blends into the open-air covered area and then into the interior pool house. How do these spaces function for this family now?

DB: There is room for many to gather at one time. A large family needs spaces that work for adults and children of varying ages all at the same moment. The fireplace sitting area is a conversation space as is the open air covered area, but the spaces are easily adaptable to serve an array of purposes. There is a wall-mounted big TV, of course, and the long dining table for family dinners or European-inspired al fresco dining. We designed a modular, fold-up serving table that can be placed under the TV for buffets. The interior space is climate



controlled and the windows can be blacked out, eliminating all light for serious movie watching, video games and resting. All the chairs in the space swivel 360 degrees so the television does not have to be the only pastime for this arrangement. There is a game table for cards, games or small dinners, and a full bar for refreshments.

Were there any specific design elements you used throughout these spaces to create flow and cohesion between the rooms?

DB: We set the color scheme via the great looking encaustic tile on the bar backsplash. The big, luxurious blue and natural Tibetan wool rug anchors the sitting area and makes the large room acoustically tight. The over-scaled leather center ottoman serves multi purposes, and since it is set on casters, it can be easily adapted to allow the occupants to stretch out. We matched the color of the ceiling to the stained concrete floor. It all works with the exterior stone and brick for the shell of the room and gave us the opportunity to punch color into the furnishings.

Please describe your furniture selections and decor. Were there any particular lines you gravitated toward or are the pieces custom designed?

DB: The wooden furniture is purchased, but we custom designed all the upholstered furniture and seating, using fabric from Perennials. Most of it is custom-made by our favorite local crafts people. We intentionally used indoor/outdoor textiles for the best family-friendly upkeep.

Knowing this family and working with them over the years, was there anything you kept in the back of your mind during the design process?

DB: This space just works so well for a fun family who cares about stylish spaces but wanted minimal upkeep. All the fabrics are indoor/outdoor fabrics which make it very easy to keep clean. The rug is 100 percent wool, a natural fiber you can clean easily. The floors are stained concrete which requires very little upkeep. It's really very easy to take care of this space. It's clutterless — even the bar area is built-in so there are no problems keeping that space tidy either.

How has this addition, which includes an interior family room with powder room, a covered exterior family space, a bedroom with a full bath and an exercise room, enhanced the property and lives of the homeowners?

DB: It was a vacant lot before they were able to acquire the property and make room for the addition. Now their growing family has room for the older teens to entertain friends. It's neither oversized nor over-scaled. They can use the pool house for a guest area when they have visitors. The entire compound is cozy, inviting and easily managed by the owners. ❖

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