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Remodeling from the Inside Out

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A whole-house remodel with multiple additions by Jon Pankratz, AIA, is complemented by a pool that seems to stretch to the horizon.

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Remodeling from the Inside Out

How a well-designed pool can unify new spaces while functioning in several capacities from the aesthetic to the recreational

By Patrick L. O'Toole

FAST FACTS ABOUT THE COMPANY:

- **Location:** Fredricksberg, Texas
- **Type of project:** Whole house remodel and addition
- **Square footage before:** Approximately 1,500
- **Square footage after:** Approximately 5,000
- **Architect:** Jon Pankratz, AIA, Fredricksberg, Texas
- **Builder/remodeler:** Ricky Durst, Durst Homes Inc.
- **Outdoor designer/builder:** D-CRAIN Design & Build, Austin, Texas. Team led by Dylan Robertson and Heather Curry.
- **Tile consultant:** Rahnee Gladwin, R. Gladwin I. Design Inc., Kerrville, Texas.

The original home, its gable in view at right, is the core from which the entire indoor and outdoor program emanates.



Whether you are standing in the master suite, the screen porch or sitting in the dining area of the home's great room, in very short order your gaze will be drawn to it: A long rectilinear pool extends outward from the protected cove of the newly remodeled home seemingly to the horizon — quite a feat for a pool that is only 13 feet wide and 55 feet long.

In the courtyard, the pool is very shallow and is anchored by potted plants. The shallows can be crossed by traversing a series of square concrete lily pads. But a few feet further out the colors change and so does the pool's function. It shifts from a pseudo coi pond feel to a deck submerged in a couple inches of water. It is, in fact, called a Vegas deck. There, the homeowners can plop down a couple of lounge chairs and dangle their feet in the water. Beyond, enclosed within the pool rises an island that is a hot tub within the pool and a longer and deeper end that offers bathing and swimming.

Though the owners, Jim and Victoria Brown, did not know exactly what they wanted when they and their architect Jon Pankratz, AIA, retained D-CRAIN Design & Construction, Austin, to conceive a hardscape and landscape plan for the newly remodeled home, they certainly liked what they saw immediately when it was presented. They had seen D-CRAIN's work in a shelter magazine and convinced the team to take the job, which was well outside their traditional service area.

"We liked it immediately," says Brown, a transplanted Californian, who relocated his family to central Texas' hill country. "Around here most of the pool contractors use plans that I would call 'dated.' They are kidney shaped. We really did not want to go in that direction."

Pankratz, who reconceived a historic 19th century stone teacher's cottage and built out arms around it to create a 5,000-sq.-ft. dwelling that is both modern and green, also greatly approved of the pool patio and grassy areas that tended to complete the home and complement it very well.

"I think the strength of the whole thing is that it can be a very intimate space, sort of hugging the main structures and it can be sort of open at the same time," says Pankratz. "So

there is this progression of spaces out from the house. And because it is long and narrow, it draws your line of sight out from the house into the open space — the pastureland and the trees. It is an architectural outdoor area."

Attending to the details

Designed and built by D-CRAIN (formerly Big Red Sun), the pool also gained a great deal of visual interest from the home's owner Victoria Brown. A clothes designer, she teamed up with Rahnee Gladwin, a tile showroom owner and designer, to select green and black glass tiles which gave the entire pool program a whole new level of vibrancy beyond the architectural virtues of the design.

"We knew we were going to do a glass pool, and then it was a matter of selecting colors that went with the environment," says Gladwin, who owns R. Gladwin I. Design in Kerrville, Texas. "That is what drove this project. We wanted color. You can see how that green blends right into the grass and the trees beyond. It is a real acid green. It has a lot of yellow in it. The other tile color is black with some iridescence in it. We wanted the black to kind of sink to the bottom of the pool and give it a depth with some sparkle in it. This is particularly true on the Vegas deck that is not very deep. It gives it a deeper feeling."

Glass tile is not a typical pool covering material, but there are several attributes that make it an excellent choice, says Gladwin. First, glass tile is infused with color and it tends to hold its vibrancy over time. It resists corrosion from the elements and does not scratch easily. And it can be treated exactly the same way ceramic floor tiles are handled. "If you drop something on a glass floor tile that would crack a ceramic tile, it will also crack the glass tile," notes Gladwin. The only difference is that you can see the full depth of any cracks in glass tile. Ceramic cracks can only be seen on the surface.

Setting the tile is also critical. Pankratz, and all involved in the project, all sang the praises of local tile setter, Matt Childs, whose skill heightened the success of the project. Great tile setters, like Childs, can manage to "float" a large area of tiles, equidistant from one another without having to cut any tiles. The whole space is covered in a perfect pattern with the same shaped tiles. The top of the

green hot tub is one area where Childs was able to accomplish this difficult task.

"He is very integral to making these projects come off the way they should," says Pankratz.

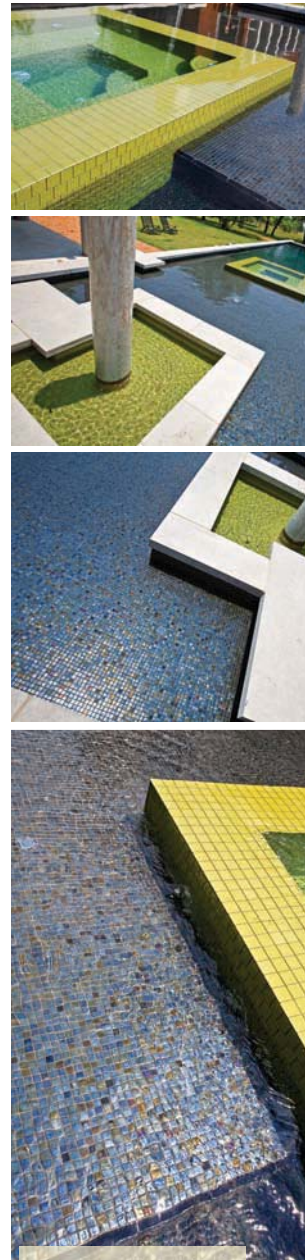
Another set of important but unseen factors into the success of the tile setting is the firmness of the substrate and the quality of the "thinset" that is used to affix the tiles to the substrate. In this case the pool and deck were made of concrete so the substrate was suitably firm. With glass tiles a special thinset that allows a certain amount of "give" was required. This helps keep the glass tiles from cracking or chipping under normal use. Mapei makes a thinset that is approved for use with glass tiles, as does Laticrete.

A program with a mix of styles

In the end, the conversion of a 13-acre site with three very old buildings dating back to an era when they served as a school house and teacher's cottage became an eclectic mix of old and new. The teacher's cottage was transformed into a 5,000-sq.-ft. residence. The old school house was refurbished as a guest house. And a third building was converted into a yoga studio. Whenever possible the old 18-in. thick stone walls of the original teacher's cottage were left exposed. In the newer areas extending out from the old stone walls, 5-in. thick stone veneers were used as exterior cladding. The new stone finish was quarried about half a mile away from the home, says Ricky Durst, a third-generation builder/remodeler who completed the project. The more modern features of the project included the use of exposed steel framing and steel retaining walls in the landscaping.

"I have a really good friend who is a great architect in Dallas who calls this mixed style that I use, a carnival of architecture," says Pankratz. "It draws on traditional Texas homes but with a little more modern flair or detail to it."

This makes the unifying accomplishment of the pool and outdoor living patio all the more impressive. In this sense, outdoor spaces can no longer be seen as front, back or side yards; they become part of what holds all the other spaces together and connects them to the surrounding area. | QR



Glass tiles from Interstyle and Hakatai were expertly set by a seasoned professional, Matt Childs. Durable as ceramics, the tiles radiate color across the entire project.