



A Temple in the Woods

The Bodron and Fruit-designed glass and limestone house, tucked deep inside a verdant creek-side lot, glows like a lantern in the woods.

Cold. Sharp. Shiny. Hard. These brittle words are used often in descriptions about contemporary architecture. None of these words applies to the glass and limestone rectangle—a glowing lantern in the woods—designed last year by Svend Fruit of the architecture and design firm Bodron+Fruit. Nestled on a sylvan one-acre lot, the 4,200-square-foot house defies stylistic categorization. Call it Zen Teahouse or Scandinavian Texas vernacular. Either way, it's a masterpiece of contemporary architecture. With the architect's Scandinavian heritage in play, and with a love of the Asian sensibilities and the owners' needs in mind, Fruit has created a temple to nature and its twin virtues: precision and harmony.

It's easy to miss the driveway that leads from a break in the tall, overgrown hedges off a winding, Bluff View-area road. Drive across a gravel bridge that traverses a shallow creek, and you'll see the house off to the right. The lot is steep. A hill rises all along the back perimeter of the house—a thickly wooded slope that can be viewed, remarkably, from the front, thanks to long walls of glass on all sides. The house is dramatic enough to be the center of attention, without taking up much space. In these days of zero-lot housing, it's rare to find a house that allows so much land around it to remain unused. Luxury, as defined here, is not about how much room one has inside, but out.

This doesn't mean the owners, two high-powered attorneys, live in cramped quarters. With so many big windows, the feeling of open space extends infinitely.

Tailored as tautly as a bespoke suit, the house is a deceptively simple pavilion, partially sheathed in lime-

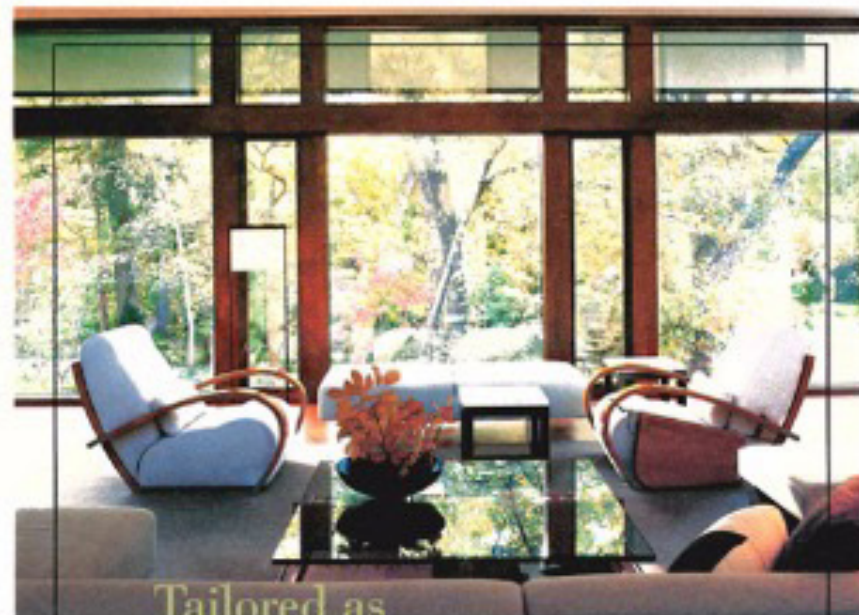
BY DAVID FELD
PHOTOGRAPHY KA YEUNG
STYLING JAN YEUNG
FLOWERS BY URBAN FLOWER

stone with a seamless copper roof, that thrusts into a deep, protective overhang. Its walls are made from thick blocks of Texas limestone and fitted with broad strips of mahogany. Windows are custom-made and measure as large as six feet by seven feet each. Inside, luminous teakwood floors anchor the expanse of windows, which frame a front yard thickly tangled with live oak, dogwood and pecan trees.

Despite its openness and the incorporation of so much stone and glass, this is the kind of house you can pad around in barefoot. Teak floors—and the wood-land views beyond—soften the cool cut-limestone blocks that make up the fireplace and exterior walls. A bit of the ethereal combined with the secure. Like fine jewelry, the hardware in the house is all beautifully detailed. And what makes these details so precious is the economy in which the architect employs them. The floor grills for air and heating are rectangular slivers of brushed aluminum. The floors are edged with cork inlay which, as the floors expand and contract, removes the need for molding. A 90-foot-long central hall is the spine of the house and gives it discipline. Rooms open off it and are thereby defined. The living room and the dining room are separated by a big fireplace set into the floating limestone wall. While there are few doors in this house—only the bedrooms have real doors, leaving everything else out in the open—this is hardly a loft. This central verbiage is what gives each room its definition, so the rooms become airy instead of amorphous.

While the owners lead complex professional lives, their home life is simple, even spare. But how does one decorate the interior of a house where architecture is paramount and furniture is almost beside the point? For interior designer Mi Bodron, it meant making the furniture part of the architecture instead of letting it be

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Opposite page: The living room's maple cabinets are flush with the wall and conceal a full entertainment center. Sofa and bench from Cassia. Jaime Tessera-designed glass coffee table. Floor lamp is Christian Liaigre for Holly Hunt.

Left: Detail of living room includes a pair of Jaime Tessera Spanish walnut chairs. Small limestone table by Spencer Fung.



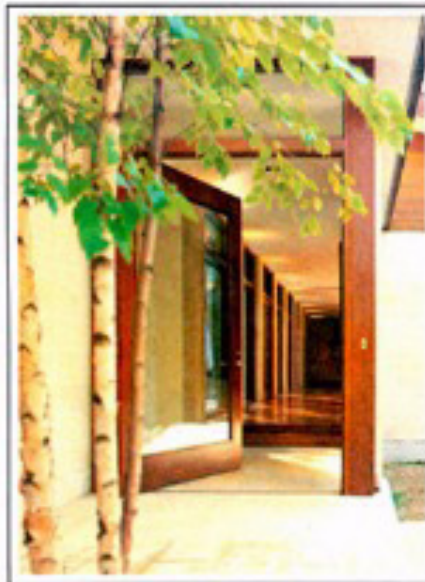
Right: The house, designed by architect Svend Fruit of Bodron+Fruit, was completed in early 2002. "To me, 'modern' means a house incorporates everything, from the site it's built on to the way the owners live," says Fruit.



Left: The slope of the house's roof can be seen in the clerestory window. "The geometry of the space was derived from the site," says architect Svend Fruit. "The important aspects of this house are the site and the views—inside and out. We wrapped the windows on all sides so there is a more natural view. And with a house with so many windows, the exterior becomes the interior color palette. Large overhangs keep out direct sunlight, but there is still a lot of light coming in. So we used richer materials like teak on the floors and mahogany on the windows to absorb the brightness. While there is a lot of white, it's not a crisp white box."



Above: In the dining room, a pair of white marble tables on casters designed by Joe D'Urso in the 1980s for Knoll can be used separately or joined together for larger dinners. 1930s vintage chairs are covered in Rogers and Goffigon fabric.



Left: The empty deer stews off the house's 80-foot long spine.
Below from left: Lapalma Lem stools from Italy in the kitchen. **Below center:** A view of pool and fountain from main hall. Enamelled steel lounge chairs from Alisa. **Below right:** In the white marble master bath, the window is frosted on its lower half for privacy, while still allowing light in and a view to the outside.



Above: Architect Sverre Frit and interior designer M.J. Bodron.

Above right: Detail of the master bedroom with Cassina chair. Floor lamp by Modigliani.

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apart from it. The living room is set with a pair of Spanish walnut upholstered chairs by Jaime Trosetta and a modular sofa from Cassina. The dining room's only furniture is a pair of square white marble Knoll tables on casters, so that they can be pushed together to seat eight, or pulled apart for smaller convivial groups. What little furniture there is in the house is quite good — pieces from Cassina, Spencer Fung, Ecart and such are scattered throughout — but Bodron's rooms are so distilled that the people inside them and the views outside the windows become the decoration. Suffice it to say that where you need to sit, there is a place to sit, and where you need a place to put a drink, there is a table.

This is not to say there's anything austere about living in this house. The architect and designer installed the kind of conveniences that help make it a refuge from stress. Electric blinds can be lowered and raised at the flip of a switch. Precise conservation means the temperature inside remains constant (the highest air-conditioning bill the owners have ever received did not exceed \$250). Interior lights come on at dusk, as does a backyard waterfall, to welcome the owners home each evening. Simple pleasures are sometimes the most luxurious.



Desk from Ecart, designed in 1992, nestles in a corner of the downstairs study, overlooking the pool. Chair by Mario Bellini for Cassina, covered in Rogers and Goffigon chenille. Lamp from Ecart designed in 1997.

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