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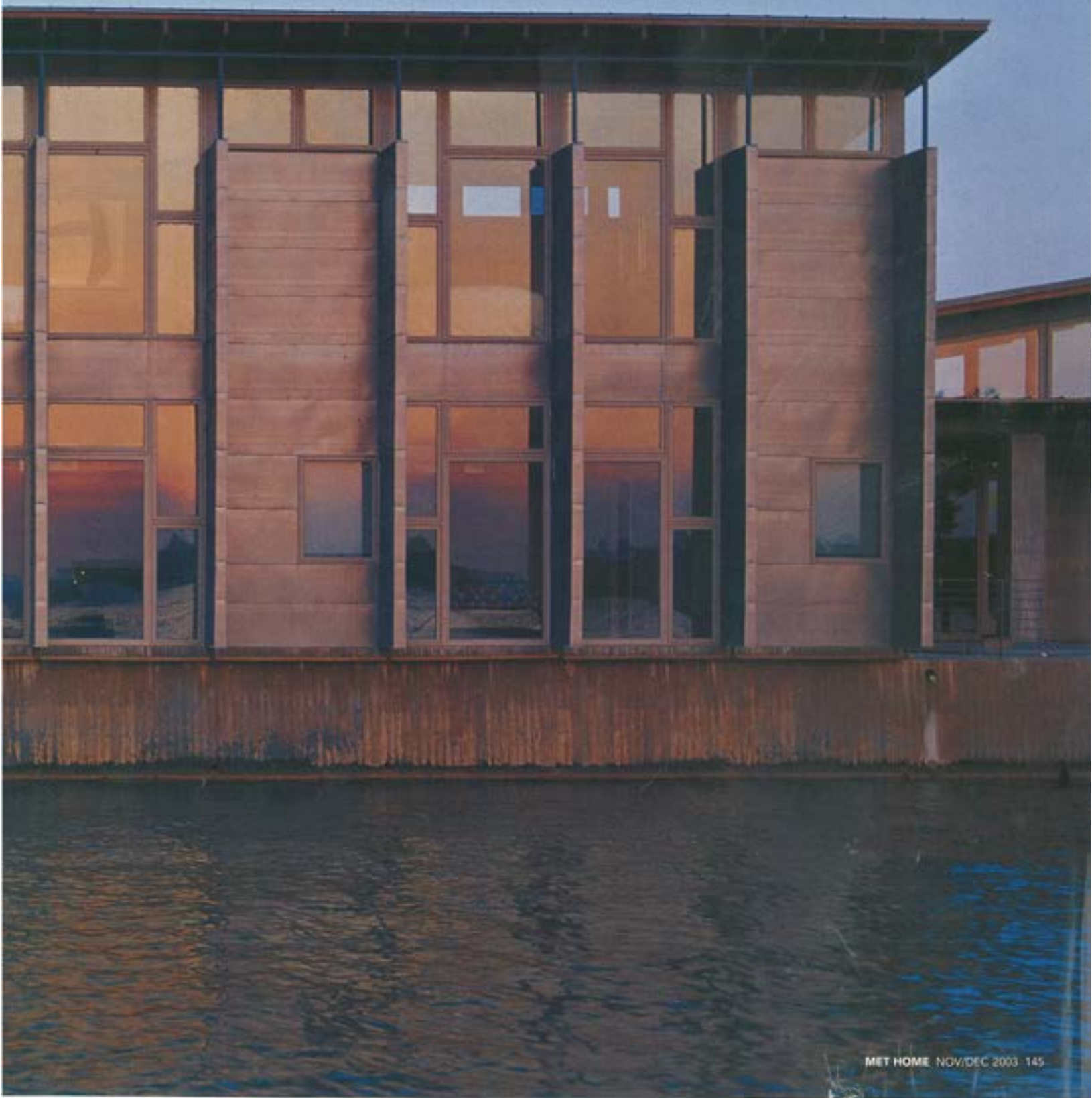




SHORETHING

FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION IN A TEXAS LAKESIDE HOUSE DESIGNED FOR A FAMILY THAT WANTED NOTHING MORE THAN TO MAKE A SPLASH—INTO THE WATER.

"The house seems big," says the owner, a Texas surgeon, "but half of it is porches." Interior pathways that link the home's three pavilions are sheltered by a single roof: "We didn't want our guests to have to hide behind a window to enjoy the lake," the owner says. "We wanted to make the outside inviting, no matter how hot it gets."





A low rumble intruding on silence is a familiar sound around here. In fact, the owners of this assertive, idiosyncratic lakeside home are quite used to it. It's the monotone of motors being cut as boats slow down for passengers to take a drive-by gander at the concrete, rock, glass and metal house that rises from the craggy shoreline.

"It's definitely on the tourist circuit," admits Rick Archer, a principal with Overland Partners Architects in San Antonio.

But despite the charismatic result, the look of the place was never the owners' primary concern. "In fact," says Archer, who teamed up with Dallas interior designer Emily Summers on the 4,500-square-foot project, "our clients never said one word about what they wanted their house to look like." Function was far more relevant.

PRODUCED BY HELEN THOMPSON AND DORETTA SPERDUTO.
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JEFF McNAMARA. WRITTEN BY HELEN THOMPSON.

"The house is all about natural light and water, and how they relate to the interior," says the architect. The cherry wood casework adds warmth but also hides air and heating ducts. Because so much of the living space is outside, the residence is easy to take care of. Opposite (below): the minimalist view from the front door to the water.





A single room that combines dining, living and kitchen functions faces a wall of glass under a beamed pitched roof. The concrete walls were so tall (26 feet) they had to be poured in sections; the resulting grid echoes the scored floors. Interior designer Emily Summers chose comfortable yet practical furniture that combines classic B&B Italia seating and family pieces.

"We had lived in this house in our minds," says the husband, a neurosurgeon. "We knew exactly how we would use it." The operative word was definitely "use." The family of five—the kids are ages 20, 17 and 13—love the water. "They wanted to pull up to the door in their SUV, which would be packed to the gills with beach balls, floats and boating gear," recalls Archer, "and everybody—including the family dogs—would jump out and run straight into the water."

To make the route from the car to the lake as unobstructed as possible, Archer conceived of three pavilions, cleaving the main house in two with a wide concrete dogtrot of a breezeway. It begins at the driveway, sweeps between a courtyard and the glass-sided main living pavilion before merging into steps that plunge right into the lake for instant aqueous gratification. "You can start having fun here in a matter of seconds," says Archer.

The house—its foundation a bulwark of slab concrete—rises like a seawall out of the water. It stretches along the brink of the lake, dotting on its surroundings: the water, a granite outcropping across the lake and a pair of hills beyond. The house itself mimics this vista: A two-story “dormitory” containing children’s and guest bedrooms is flanked on one side by a soaring glass-walled pavilion with the public spaces and the master bedroom, and on the other by a third pavilion—for media room, garage and boathouse.

“Our inspiration for the materials comes from the landscape as well,” remarks Archer. The patina of the concrete in the shell of the house relates to the gritty gray of the granite outcropping. The choice pleased the owners: “We do a lot of entertaining,” says the wife, “and we didn’t want to worry about hurting anything. Concrete is impervious to disaster.”

It’s also an energy-efficient material, which turned out to be a momentous consideration because the house faces due west. “That is always a troubling thing in Texas,” understates the architect. “But the owners would be getting a great view of the sunset,” he jokes, “if they could stand the heat.”

The solution came in the time-honored form of porches, in this case a network that both separates the pavilions and unites them. “We pushed the public areas way back from the water,” explains Archer, “but brought the terraces up to the edge.” Besides buffering the house from the brutal Texas heat, the porches are front-row seats for storm watching. “The water goes steely gray,” says the husband, “then the sky gets black, and the water sloshes over the edges of the porches. It’s really exciting.”





To outfit the house, designer Emily Summers, who is admired for her work with mid-century modern furniture, created interiors that could withstand activity of all kinds, both intentional and unintentional. "This is a cool house," she explains, "and the architecture is dominant. The furniture has to stand up to it—nothing crafty or veneered was going to work here."

Summers's first purchases were three all-wool handmade Swedish rugs. They are luxuriously nubby underfoot but practical—the lanolin in the wool vigorously repels water. "I'm partial to them because they are so beautiful," she says, "and they're reversible, so my clients can just flip them over if they get dirty." In the living room, Summers chose two Arne Jacobsen Swan chairs—the lighthearted ovoids are a landmark of comfortable seating design. "They swivel," she says, "so that someone who is seated in them can turn around to see the irresistible view." All the other furniture in the room, most of it modern Italian pieces, faces the ever-changing aquatic spectacle, whether it's the weather or a gaudy parasail drifting by.

"The dining room was meant for flexibility," Summers adds. "This house sort of contracts when there are just the two of us," say the owners, who occupy the pavilion containing the living room and their master bedroom. But it also succeeds with large groups. Two custom wood-and-iron dining tables can be pulled apart, one to be used as a game table and the other for a smaller klatch of diners, or pushed together when friends arrive. Usually the tables stay together. "We aren't here by ourselves very often," says the wife with a laugh. "The guest rooms fill up pretty fast." ❖
See Resources, last pages.





The master bedroom is the most introspective room in the home. Two cushy club chairs provide the sole opportunity in the house to turn away from the view. A delicate nuance of green in the carpet and bed linens suggests a placidity not always present in the unpredictable lake. The master bath (opposite) is an open wet room with its own door to the master bedroom's terrace.