

A 1950s Poolhouse Gets a Tastefully Modern Makeover

Designer Melissa Morgan converts a historic pavilion into a luxurious and relaxing space to entertain

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A poolhouse epitomizes leisure, but renovating one that's in bad shape requires quite a bit of work. Built in 1952 by prominent Texas architect Atlee B. Ayres, the poolhouse on this San Antonio estate had historic value. The homeowners, a couple with grown children, were keen to restore it as the centerpiece of their grounds. "But it was in such a state of disrepair, it was almost unsalvageable," says designer Melissa Morgan of the local firm [M Interiors](#). "Fortunately, a complete restoration allowed us to find the spirit of the original pavilion." Working with architect [Craig McMahon](#), Morgan took a "surgical" approach to the reconstruction, with an eye toward modernization. The space was expanded to 1,100 square feet to add an outdoor kitchen, while his-and-her changing rooms were scrapped in favor of a guest bedroom and kitchen. The results honor the original design while giving the clients an impressive poolside living area for both formal and casual entertaining. Here's how Morgan brought this relaxed yet lovely poolhouse back to life.



After years of neglect, the 850-square-foot cabana was overgrown with ivy. Morgan opened the attic above the center seating area, added more windows to flood the interior with natural light, and created an outdoor cook space. The restoration, which kept the original slate roof tiles and oculus window, “gently pushed the poolhouse into the 21st century,” Morgan says.



After the attic was opened, the ceiling above the center seating area was raised, and whitewashed wood was added for a subtle contrast with the painted walls. Furniture and fabrics from Janus et Cie and sconces by the Urban Electric Co. lend clean-lined appeal.



The indoor kitchen, featuring a Viking range and hood and a Waterworks subway-tile backsplash, occupies the space formerly allotted to a changing room. It's the perfect size to prepare meals for intimate gatherings as well as support the catering at larger events.



"The client uses media equipment for work-related presentations, and the family is really passionate about film," says Morgan. With the new audio-visual system, "they can watch movies from the pool!" Decorative curtains with bold black-and-white stripes add a playful Old Hollywood feel.



A 250-square-foot addition allowed for an outdoor kitchen/barbecue area. "We located it on the left side of the structure, which can't be viewed by the main house, so the update doesn't intrude on the feel of the property," Morgan says.