

Perfect for outdoor entertaining, the screened porch offers welcome with rustic La Lune table, chairs and seating. The vaulted ceiling is mushroom wood, hemlock used as growing boards, then scraped and sanded for a beautifully mottled effect.

PRAIRIE PANACHE

Rugged meets cultivated
the second time around in
this Lake Toxaway home

By Kate O'Connor . Photography by David Dietrich

Texans are renowned for doing things in a big way. Expansive lands, grand gestures, abundant hospitality. And even when they set themselves down far from the Lone Star state — in the mountains of Western North Carolina, for example — that inimitable sense of style hitches up and comes along with them.



Elegant and understated, with outstanding views of Lake Toxaway, this classic mountain home is the second that Platt Architecture has designed at the upscale community for a discerning couple from South Texas.

Over a decade ago, a particular couple — ranchers from the lower Rio Grande Valley — was passing through on their way back from leaf peeping in New England and decided to spend the night at the Greystone Inn at Lake Toxaway. They fell in love with the area; the cool breezes off the lake and the mellow mountain air. “We have two seasons in Texas,” notes the husband, “hot and hotter.”

They purchased a lakeside property and built a sprawling vacation home. Reflecting the work of architect Al Platt, builder James McGinnis and Kathryn Long, ASID of Ambiance Interiors, the resulting residence delighted them in every way but one: it was too big. In what might be seen as an uncharacteristically Texan move, they chose to go smaller. They purchased a lot high on the mountainside, with a panoramic lake view and started over.

“When we decided to build the new house, it made sense to go with the same team,” the husband explains, “especially when you’re doing it from 1,200 miles away.” In many ways, the hard part had been done. For their new construction, the homeowners worked with Platt, making modifications to one of his existing home plans to suit the site and capitalize on the surrounding landscape. “One thing about Al Platt,” says the husband, “whatever your view is, he frames it beautifully with the windows.” They re-enlisted McGinnis because, according to the gentleman, their previous home had been “built like a fort. You’d look down the walls and they were just as straight as can be.”

Kathryn Long had met the challenge of establishing the proper aesthetic blend for the original house, so the couple was confident that she could translate their style into the new residence. Seasoned collectors of fine furnishings and art objects and boasting a treasure trove of beloved family heirlooms, the couple came to the project with well-established taste: she loves Victorian, he is an outdoorsman and hunting enthusiast.

“I took a clue from one of their family pieces — an early 1900s globe lamp with a magnificent hand-painted stag,” Long recalls. “I remembered that George Vanderbilt had a hunting lodge — Victorian style — in the mountains. I requested some images of the lodge from the historian at Biltmore Estate. There is quite a bit of rustic — the old Hickory type furniture — and some old English, dark wood. And lots of fringe,



Custom double-sided bookcases by Wildwood Studios create a sense of enclosure and privacy in the upstairs library, which opens to the gallery. Circa 1900 cabinets that the homeowner noticed in Ambiance Interiors Design Studio inspired the cases.

trims and braids. That was my inspiration, sort of Mountain Victorian, and they loved the idea.”

With the contents of the former house in storage, Long and the homeowners began to set the stage. Wall treatments and flooring were of great importance to the couple. “They are very detail oriented. We started with the background,” Long explains. “He wanted a lot of wood, but she didn’t want it to feel too dark and heavy. The compromise was painted wood.”

Decorative painter Lyna Farkas worked for months, applying multiple glazes to the planks, creating the illusion of age and patina in a soft, sophisticated palette of cream, red and green. Farkas also worked her magic on the custom cabinets by Carl Gieshenschlag of Wildwood Studios in the kitchen and baths, distressing the refined woodwork to give it a more rustic feel. Highly polished granite countertops and an exquisite granite shower with opalescent inclusions from Mountain Marble and Granite provide a sleek counterpoint.

For the flooring, the couple chose #2 and #3 grade oak. “The idea was for the floor to look and feel old,” says the wife, “so we wanted the imperfections — the random sizes and cuts.” Similarly, the wood used for the ceiling of the enclosed screen porch is mushroom wood: hemlock used to grow mushrooms then scraped and recycled.



In the great room, “Elmo” the Elk—himself a Texas transplant—keeps watch from the stacked-stone fireplace. The globe lamp in the entrance foyer was designer Kathryn Long’s inspiration for the home’s “Mountain Victorian” theme. The wood plank walls were custom stained and glazed by decorative painter Lyna Farkas.

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Compact and efficient, the kitchen area offers a breakfast bar that allows guests to converse with the cook. Cabinets by Wildwood Studios feature paneled glass doors. Polished granite countertops are by Mountain Marble & Granite. The appliances were sourced from Haywood Appliance.



An antique French acid-etched Muller Fres Luneville cameo glass chandelier illuminates the dining room, hanging over a Toby West table and chairs. A pair of Bausman cabinets flanks the entrance to the screened porch. Stroheim & Roman fabric graces the windows. The walls are painted deep red, glazed in gold for added sparkle.

“This home is very practical and functional, but it’s also a reflection of who the homeowners are.”



With an intoxicating view of Lake Toxaway from the slipper tub, the master bath is a dream escape. Antique French mirrors reflect the light from a pair of sconces by Dana Creath. The area rug is from Togar Rugs. Casual roman shades of embroidered Duralee linen soften the abundant sunlight.

Working with Platt’s blueprints, Long created space plans for each room to accommodate and integrate the couple’s existing furniture and rugs, along with several pieces that they had acquired in the interim. Their finds included an antique French acid-etched Muller Freres cameo glass chandelier for the dining room and a massive wrought iron bed — fabricated from antique garden gates and topped with an open canopy — that the homeowners had commissioned for their master suite. “We had to have exact proportions — before construction of the house — so the dealer could alter it to fit,” Long recalls. “The corolla came to within inches of the ceiling.”

With construction complete and the homeowner’s possessions moved in, the benefits of all the planning and attention to detail became clear in a seemingly effortless melding of the rugged and the cultivated. “It’s a very personal house,” says Long. “Many people who have a second home say ‘let’s just get some functional furniture in here’ and leave it at that. Well this home is very practical and functional, but it’s also a reflection of who the homeowners are.”

It’s a place where mountain charm meets prairie panache — a combination that garnered the Carolinas Chapter ASID Award for Design Excellence in the Secondary Home Category for 2011. But that’s not so surprising. Texans are known for doing things in a big way. ■



The homeowners found this massive hand-forged bedstead made from antique iron gates in San Antonio and had it custom fitted to within inches of the ceiling. The drapery fabric is from Warner Fabrics; duvet fabric is Beacon Hill.