



Well-Executed Minimalism Is the Goal in This Texas Tudor

Designer Benjamin Johnston distills a Houston home down to its curvaceous essence

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If you can believe it, the original plans for this Houston brick home specified a full-on English Tudor treatment—parapet gables, external buttresses, and beamed ceilings. But when the lot changed hands before the build, the creative course took a turn too. Because the construction documents were included with the purchase of the land and building permits had in fact already been granted by the city based on that initial scheme, the new owners were understandably reluctant to start over again from square one. Instead, they hired AD PRO Directory designer Benjamin Johnston to rework the look and feel of the structure within its existing envelope while implementing a sleeker, pared-back vision.

Inspired by the churchlike overtones of Tudor architecture, Johnston gave his redesign the grandness of a cathedral, but the meditative quietness of a monastery. The process, he says, was one of streamlining—a “carving away” at the contours of the home, “paring them down to the most simple, elegant manifestation.” At the same time, features that had been sharp and angular were stretched into flowing curves in the barrel vault that crowns the lofty dining room, for example, along with an elliptical main stair and arced ceilings in the family room, principal bedroom, and a covered rear patio.



The double-height entry and elliptical stair hall—an almost seashell-like interplay of curves—are on axis with the dining room, creating a dramatic set piece that runs across the front of the residence. The glass wine enclosure is custom, designed to be as big a rhythmic statement as the steps themselves and the hanging chandelier of marble discs and brass. The home will be featured in the designer's forthcoming book, *Refined Interiors: Timeless Homes for Modern Living*, out February 17, 2026.

Extra-deep jambs in doorways give the architecture a sense of solidity, as if the walls are thick slabs of old-fashioned masonry; integral sinks in the bathrooms seem like they're scooped out of monolithic stone blocks. Outside, the parapets and buttresses remain, but now they're coated in tawny stucco. A matching finish continues indoors, with most of the spaces sheathed in soft-textured plaster.

Rounded shapes, from gentle bows to full circles, characterize the majority of the home's furniture and fittings, which Johnston juxtaposed against highly linear millwork and cabinetry. Antique, vintage, and contemporary pieces rub shoulders—even if certain bits of the house, such as the family room's concave fireplace, were specifically designed to not require embellishment. The glass-enclosed wine display that forms one side of the entry hall could count as an artwork in itself, as could the entry's showstopping suspended chandelier, which Johnston had made by Australian lighting designer Volker Haug.



An extra-long [Four Hands sectional sofa](#) and a monumental concrete fireplace stand like a pair of parentheses in the family room. The equally curvaceous chandelier is by [Alison Berger for RH](#), and three large cactuses form a sculptural screen for the window. The two swivel chairs are from Johnston's own collection for [Chaddock Furniture](#)

“Once we established the DNA of this home,” Johnston says, “it was exciting for us to keep riffing on it in different ways.” Certain materials—concrete, wood slats, brass, figured marbles—appear again and again. Rugs throughout are from the Toronto-based firm [Elte](#), and they share a certain family resemblance even though their patterns vary from a plain, slubby monochrome in the family room to an assertive parallel stripe in the dining area. Each room is distinct, and each contributes to a unified overall harmony.

“For a lot of my work,” Johnston notes, “we do a lot of clear, bright, saturated colors. So it was really fun to play with a palette of moodier, darker, softer earth tones.” The study’s eggplant purple for example, came from nearby art.

At a time when many designers seem to be competing to win the maximalist sweepstakes, Johnston aimed for “a well-executed minimalism, where it’s not so empty that it feels barren, but has just the right number of elements to feel considered and thoughtful.” In this residence—sculptural and dramatic, but also calm, harmonious, and livable —“our goal,” he says, “was really to create a home unlike any we had seen before.”



The kitchen incorporates what Johnston calls “living finishes”—that is, materials that convey a sense of age and patina—including a chevron-pattern white oak floor, antique nickel pendants from [Visual Comfort](#), a concrete range hood, and display cabinet doors of metal and glass.



In the tall, barrel-vaulted dining room, the pendant lights over the table are cleverly suspended from the side of an open upstairs gallery. The geometric painting by [John Hiigli](#) reminds Johnston of a stained-glass window and provides the sole burst of color in an otherwise neutral environment.



In a small sitting area on the way to the family room, a painting by French artist [Pierre Farel](#) and a sand-cast faux-bronze table from [Global Views](#) inject a slight surrealist note that is evident elsewhere in the home as well.

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Although some recognizable Tudor profiles remain on the home's exterior, its simplified lines, minimal detailing, glass-and-steel windows, and standing-seam metal roof all speak of modernity. The original architectural design was done by [Robert Dame Designs](#) and Johnston worked with builders at [Thompson Custom Homes](#).



The home's bar feels especially cozy thanks to its constellation of warm colors and finishes, including bouclé lounge chairs, a waffle-textured rug, and the leathered marble used for the countertops and backsplash. The custom sofa at left is covered in a [Zak + Fox fabric](#) inspired by weeping willow fronds.



The polychrome treatment on the plaster ceiling of the principal bedroom was inspired by similar ceilings Johnston saw in a hotel in Orvieto, and it echoes the color-blocking of the rug on the floor beneath. The reeded headboard of the [RH Shelter bed](#) fits the width of the room perfectly; the cantilevered travertine bench is a [Ceci Thompson design for CB2](#). A row of little art pieces was created by Johnston, who drew the colors from a painting on the opposite wall.



Johnston picked up the blackened steel and glass of the home's windows for repeat use in the primary bath's shower enclosure. Arched cutouts in the travertine backsplash are an inversion of the coved niches that house the sink and soaking tub. "Everybody loves the rhythm of form and line," the designer says, "and we really enjoyed thinking about how many different ways we could come up with to approach it."



The aubergine plaster used on the walls and cove ceiling of the study was chosen to make the room's two paintings really pop. Thanks to an off-center firebox, the asymmetrical fireplace is an active participant in the furniture plan. An olive green sofa from [Four Hands](#) acts as a somewhat unexpected (and gorgeous) color accent, and café curtains in a Stroheim paisley give just enough privacy without blocking light.



The two rear corners of the niche that holds the powder room sink are rounded, in accordance with the home's overarching theme. The tall, narrow [CB2 mirror](#) floats slightly off the wall and is backlit with LEDs, giving it a glowing halo when the lights are turned on. The equally svelte sconce is from [Visual Comfort](#).



In another small bathroom, conical furlled-metal pendants flank a mosaic of antiqued mirror pieces. The backsplash wall is a breccia-pattern porcelain tile from [Del Conca](#).



A covered patio provides pleasant dining and lounging space (when the steamy Southeast Texas climate allows). Wall finishes for both the interior and exterior of the house are nearly indistinguishable, meant to blur the separation between outside and in.