





## CLEAR CHANNELING

*A glass and steel house with see-through everything keeps its museum chops while inviting friends and family to come in and play*

BY PAMELA GWYN KRIPKE | PHOTOGRAPHY BY PETER MURDOCK

This house does tricks. Kitchen drawers are really refrigerators. A wall of solid wenge wood conceals a coat closet. Medicine cabinets hinge in brazen directions.

"Watch this," says the daughter of the owners, flipping a switch on the foyer wall. In seconds, the entry's double panes of clear glass become opaque as an electronic charge rearranges the particles of the gas in between. "For privacy," she explains.

The Translucens House, as it is named, is a 10,000-square-foot study in streamline modern, a post-and-beam steel construction framed in glass and finished with exquisite detail. At once a home and a gallery for a comprehensive collection of 20th century painting, sculpture and furniture, the Highland Park residence straddles the disparate functions and adds a third, as art itself.

"The architecture does call out a lot of attention, and sometimes, the box can overwhelm the jewelry inside it, but there is enough breathing space that the art and the house can co-exist," says Robert J. Neylan, who designed the home with James Nagle, of Nagle Hartray Danker Kagan McKay Penney Architects, Ltd. of Chicago. "Functionally," says Nagle, "it works really well, with open space, living quarters, paintings and sculpture in balance."

The home sits on a 75-by-225-foot site, and is surrounded by three huge homes. The challenge was to retain a light and open feeling without brushing up against neighbors. Windows were hung lower than usual and skylights were installed, keeping views focused on the interior courtyard, which provided the anchor for the design. Indoor rooms wrap around the glass perimeter of the rectangular patio and its infinity lap pool. A 24-foot-by-60-foot, two-story living room flanks one length, which is outfitted with hidden shades that descend on sunny days to protect the art hanging throughout the space.

Named "Translucens," the glass-and-steel home designed by Chicago architects Robert Neylan and James Nagle, maximizes living space up front, with the master bathroom and office facing the street. Glass front



"All of the walls are museum-quality, with plywood, wall board and something else in between, so we can hang even the heaviest pieces," says the owner, a proficient collector who collaborated closely with the architects in shaping the floor plan and researching materials, such as the native Zimbabwe hardwoods and Belgium spider glass encasing the lift. ("My mother never uses designers," says her daughter.)

"I wanted the kitchen island to look like two boxes, like a Donald Judd sculpture," she says, "so I chose the Italian manufacturer Boffi, and a fellow came over from Italy twice to put it in." (The kitchen, by the way, isn't too far from the Judd sculpture in the living room.)

"Seldom do you work with clients who not only use a glass elevator to get around, but make it a piece of sculpture itself," says Nagle, who has built two other residences for the couple, one here, one in Wyoming. "They are absolutely consistent in their modernism. Their furniture dates to when we did their first house here in the '70s and '80s."

The main living areas are situated in the back of the house and the sleeping areas, toward the front, in a reversal of the traditional footprint. A combination of glass, wooden and granite walkways take you through



**Above:** The Belgium spider glass walls and windows are gripped by steel holders. Inside, wenge wood bath consoles designed by Ron Benoit of Utah are paired with glass and steel fixtures. **Right:** Early '60s sofas by Florence Knoll accentuate Helen Frankenthaler's vivid *Migration*, Jack Pierson's *Roses*, an untitled black oil painting by Zehedee Jones and Joel Shapiro's untitled sculpture in bronze





the home, which has four bedrooms, four baths and four powder rooms, each decked in unexpected finishings, from Wyoming fossil stone, a ceiling-hung shower head and a glass sink that retreats mysteriously into the cabinet.

"This is a playful modern, as opposed to strict classicist modern," says Neylan.

Even the dogs have their own smile-inducing quarters, with built-in

shower and drain, a covered nook for bedding down and an outdoor loo, complete with push-button self-filling commode.

Downstairs, the owner's collection of antique dolls, which numbers more than 300, is similarly pampered. The architects designed a room that displays the pristine array behind lit glass, as well as a work area with storage for lace, buttons, hats, flowers, petticoats and pantaloons. "I did not like dolls as a child," says the Nebraska-born sibling of three boys. "Now, I'm the Imelda Marcos of doll shoes."

Her first purchase was on McKinney Avenue 30 years ago, when she and her investment banker husband (now retired) were raising five children in Nagle Hartray's earlier project, a modern house in Preston Trails. "My parents were so busy taking care of us, that they didn't do the things they can do now, like travel and entertain," says their daughter, adding that they host many charity and political events at the house.

"It's the perfect place for parties, except a lot of women are afraid to go upstairs in skirts, with the glass floors." ■

**Above:** Donald Judd wall sculpture and Jeff Elrod oil painting among Mies van der Rohe Barcelona chairs and lounge continue the homage to modern furnishings and art. **Opposite:** A glass elevator ascends to the second floor, where glass walkways create diversions below. **XO**, in bronze, by



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