

Unified Field

Layers of texture and space create a cohesive whole. By Meghan Drueding

For architect Barron Schimberg, a house isn't a collection of different rooms. It's one overall composition, with spaces that relate to each other accordingly. So he specifies similar materials and detailing throughout a residence to establish a feeling of continuity. "The kitchen cabinets bring in the same details as all of the doors throughout the house," he says of this contemporary home in Sarasota, Fla. "I tend to do that—it brings the entire house together, really." Limestone floor tiles lie underfoot throughout most of the project. And wood, such as mahogany and cherry, adds warmth to nearly every space.

A strategically conceived floor plan also contributes to the house's feeling of unity. Schimberg grouped the kitchen, living room, dining room, and family room together in the same central area. No matter where the owners or their guests are in any of these spaces, they're privy to choice views of the adjoining canals that lead to Sarasota Bay. "That view becomes part of the entire experience of the residence," he says. In order to define each room without putting up walls, he created a series of four "clouds"—dropped ceilings embedded with tiny downlights. Xenon strip lighting gently illuminates the edges of each cloud for a floating effect, and each one is set at a different height to define the outlines of its particular room. "The different heights create an undulating feeling to offset

A rough-hewn basalt wall and a sculpted bronze railing contrast with the kitchen's smooth surfaces of polished wood and stone. Overhead, a dropped, downlit ceiling resembles a star-filled sky.



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the linearity of the house,” Schimberg explains.

(Top right) Curved elements, such as the shower, tub, and vanity, help set the master bath apart from the home’s linear exterior (above). Clerestory windows in the main living space (right) connect indoors and outdoors.

Not only do the interior spaces relate to one another, but they also connect both visually and texturally with the home’s outdoor rooms. Schimberg commissioned sculptor Eric Higgs to create a series of basalt outdoor elements: a mailbox, entry walkway, and water sculpture. “Basalt gave us a variety of colors and a roughness, too,” the architect says. Just inside the entry, a stacked basalt wall greets visitors. At Schimberg’s request, Higgs carved the rock into long, horizontal strips that direct the eye out toward the view. The wall separates the entry from the kitchen and the rest of the

main volume and provides an organic, textured surface that contrasts with the home’s many straight lines and angles.

The basalt wall and its sinuous bronze railing, also sculpted by Higgs, help make the kitchen into a visually interesting space. A ceiling cloud serves the same purpose, as does the three-level island directly underneath it. Cherry tops the island’s highest portion, while a slab of labradorite covers the middle level, which serves as a casual dining spot. The owners use the lowest part of the island as a food prep area, so Schimberg surfaced it with low-maintenance Silestone. Cherry cabinetry and a recycled-glass tile backsplash supply a simple, clean-lined background for these more dramatic elements.

Recycled-glass tile also figures largely in the master bath, where it lines the walls

and bathtub surround. Schimberg bucked the popular trend of large master baths with little separation from the bedroom, instead designing a medium-sized bath with full-height walls and a single door. “The concept was more about creating a private, serene space,” he says. “It’s not a big, open master bath.” To offset the room’s shape—a long, narrow rectangle—he added rounded features such as a gently S-shaped glass shower wall, an elliptical tub deck, and a curved vanity. The tub deck continues into the steam shower to serve as a seating area, and it also touches the vanity cabinetry. “The idea is to have this amorphic, continuous shape throughout this very long, linear box,” Schimberg explains. The bath’s relatively modest size doesn’t preclude touches of luxury: Thoughtfully placed windows allow water views and natural lighting without



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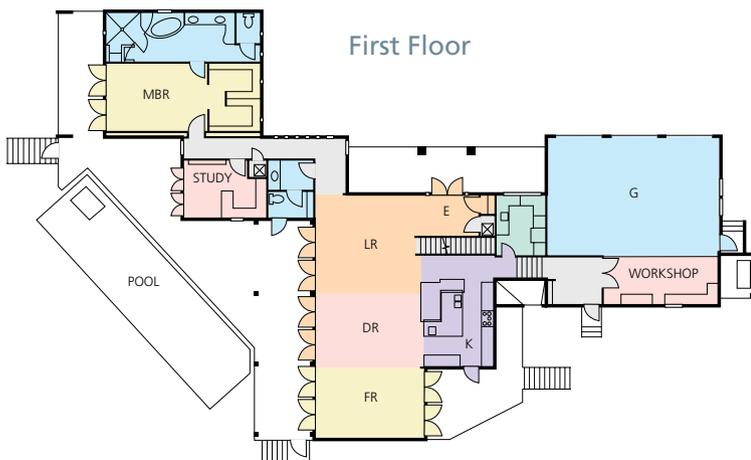
A triple-layered island provides a low countertop for food prep, a medium-height one for dining, and a tall one for socializing with the cook.



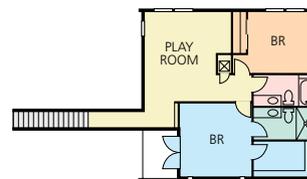
compromising privacy, while a stainless steel warming drawer holds hot towels at the ready.

Schimberg designed the house to meet Florida Green Building Standards, incorporating natural cooling into his overall eco-strategy. Transom-topped, 8-foot-tall double doors span a length of 45 feet on the west side of the house and 16 feet on the east end. The setup allows for maximum cross-ventilation, eliminating the need for air conditioning for much of the year. Low- or no-VOC paints and sealants enhance the home's indoor air quality, a tankless water heater and drought-tolerant plants cut down on water consumption, and Icynene insulation increases energy efficiency. An on-site construction waste recycling program took care of leftover building materials. Schimberg worked with builder Tandem Construction and the owners on a green building plan from the

beginning of the project. "Green is more expensive when you bring it in later," the architect says. "It's better to design it in from the start." ■



Second Floor



Project Credits: Builder: Tandem Construction, Sarasota, Fla.; Architect: The Schimberg Group, Sarasota; Interior designer: Robert Claussen, Sarasota; Landscape designer: Grant's Gardens, Sarasota; Living space: 4,000 square feet; Site: .4 acre; Construction cost: Withheld; Photographer: Greg Wilson

Group. ■ Resources: Countertops: CaesarStone, Circle 400 and Silestone, Circle 401; Fittings/fixtures: Bainultra, Circle 402, Franke, Circle 403, Grohe, Circle 404, Nexus, Circle 405, Toto, Circle 406, and Villeroy & Boch, Circle 407; Oven: Wolf, Circle 408.