

Renovation Architecture by Ryan Street & Associates  
Interior Design by RWM Design/Landscape Architecture by LandWest Design Group  
Text by Nancy Collins/Photography by Robert Reck



ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST VISITS

# Lance Armstrong

STEERING A COURSE TO TEXAS, THE CYCLIST CREATES A WELCOMING HOUSE IN AUSTIN

**W**hen you have seven record-breaking, legend-making yellow Tour de France jerseys to adorn your walls, what's a mere Francis Bacon?

A lot, it seems, to Lance Armstrong—self-described “amateur art collector”—whose walls in his spectacular 8,000-square-foot Austin, Texas, home happily trumpet the glory of art over sports. “You’re not going to walk in here and immediately get hit with championship trophies, because, frankly, I don’t like having my stuff displayed,” admits Armstrong, whose trademark jerseys are discreetly tucked away on the walls of an upstairs media room where “very few venture,” he says. “Other than some bikes in the garage, you wouldn’t know who lives here. My kids and I certainly never discuss all that. Obviously, they know Dad was a bike racer who won the Tour de France, but they also know



ABOVE: Professional cyclist Lance Armstrong (right) lives in a Spanish colonial-style house in Austin, Texas. Of design, he says with a laugh, “I don’t know if I’m a pro, but I know I like it.”



“I’ll probably host a dozen dinners a year, and we’ll have appetizers or drinks in the living room,” says Armstrong, who hired Roy W. Materanek to give the interiors a smart, contemporary look. Over the mantel is a work by Andres Serrano. McGuire table lamps. A. Rudin sofas. Wood-frame chair chenille, Clarence House. Schumacher drapery silk.



Top: Ryan Street & Associates, which overhauled the house, added a terrace looking out to the grounds, created by LandWest Design Group. Janus et Cie sofa and chairs. ABOVE: Family photographs and a photograph by Danny Lyon, by the door, decorate the kitchen. Swaim barstools. Osborne & Little banquette vinyl. Vent and Viking range and microwave, at Abt.com. Kohler sinks.

that my main job now is cancer advocate—which is how I'd rather have them see it." Still, it was eight-year-old Luke and six-year-old twins Grace and Bella who two years ago motivated the record holder to buy the 40-year-old structure smack in the midst of a remodel. "In the past, I lived six or seven months a year in Europe, training, traveling. But now, being here more than ever before, I wanted a family home where the kids and I could be comfortable and spend time with friends and extended family." "Family"

includes his ex-wife, Kristin Armstrong, with whom he has amicable joint custody. "Being a big part of their lives—and mine, too—she's here a lot," he says. "My dream was big open rooms... people sitting on the floor... the kids having friends over. The greatest sound in the world is children laughing." The other component, he adds, was "lots of green, outdoor space where kids can run and roll in the grass. I'm always telling my own, 'Go outside. Let's kick the soccer ball, throw the football,

swim.'" When it came to landscaping all that green, Armstrong had definite ideas. "I wanted things on an axis, so we created probably 10 different points from which you can look out on the line. Standing in the family room, you stare straight into the fountain; by the pool cabana your eye gets pulled all the way down the row of Italian cypress trees, and you think, I need to walk down there." To mastermind his new family base, Armstrong hooked up with Roy W. Materanek, his partner-in-design-crime

since 1995, when the pair worked together on Armstrong's first house (following up with homes in Spain and New York, a Texas ranch and, currently, a getaway in the Bahamas). "Roy was one of the best decisions I ever made. Once you get the right team together, I always assume it's not a good idea to change." (That includes the architectural firm, Ryan Street & Associates, which has also worked on many of his houses.) "Lance is hands-on, likes being involved," says Materanek, who knew Armstrong "before his tours, even before

A stone staircase—"a great architectural feature," Armstrong notes—is visible from the family room. Materanek, who collaborated with his associate Jill Zamen, selected a range of "clean-lined furnishings and textural fabrics" for the space. Sofa from Jan Showers. Open-arm chairs from A. Rudin. Chair and ottoman fabric from Greeff. Rug from Patterson, Flynn & Martin.

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ABOVE: Jerseys from the Tour de France, which Armstrong won seven times, from 1999 to 2005, are displayed in the media/game room. “He didn’t want them in a prominent place,” says Materanek. J. Robert Scott spotted pillow print. Dedar fabric on chair and ottoman in foreground. Pollack mohair on side chair. Great Plains wool on cocktail ottoman. RIGHT: The pool cabana looks down a walk framed by cypresses. Janus et Cie chaise and table base. David Sutherland chairs and sofa, with Perennials fabric.

his cancer. He’s receptive, listens to what you’re saying and makes quick, smart decisions. If you suggest something shouldn’t be done, he’s agreeable. Lance’s had a lot of exposure in his life—and paid attention.”

In fact, he even took photos. “I’m always snapping pictures of things I like,” says Armstrong, pointing out the property’s front gate. “One day, riding in the south of France, I passed this gate with great Gothic features and thought, I have to have that, and stopped and took a picture.” He did so again in Spain, where his documentation of 12 different Gothic balustrades resulted in the elaborate hybrid balustrade that graces the three-story home’s dramatic winding staircase.

But he didn’t stop there. When it came to the sofas in the living room, with its cool, caramel-colored Venetian-plastered walls, Armstrong suggested they ditch

traditional “heavy skirt-to-the-floor couches” in favor of something more uplifting. “Lance wanted the sofas up off the rug to provide more open leg space, so we chose sofas with legs; exposing the antique Ushak rug beneath made the room feel much lighter,” says Materanek.

Nevertheless, Armstrong says he finds “a formal living room almost completely useless, since people really live in kitchens, family rooms, bedrooms and studies. The cool thing about my living room is that because it’s the first room you see when you walk in—living room on the right, dining room the left—it serves as a welcome.”

The same could be said for the dining room, which has gorgeous deep blue-berry Venetian plaster walls that “took four or five tries to get right,” he recalls. “The poor guys had to keep coming back. After trying several shades—we still



“Other than some bikes in the garage, you wouldn’t know who lives here,” remarks Armstrong.



weren’t happy—we finally tried one that had the right depth of color. When that dried, everyone said, ‘Bingo! That’s it!’ Lastly, when we put up Ed Ruscha’s lithograph, I thought, ‘That’s perfect’—in more ways than one, since its message, “Safe and Effective Medication,” is particularly dear to the homeowner’s heart.

The master suite “was all Roy,” concedes Armstrong. “The Persian rug and Antonio Más painting from my house in Spain gave us the colors for the chairs and walls. However, when Roy put out the idea of a stainless-steel fireplace, I said, ‘I don’t know what the hell you’re talking about, but it sounds cool, so let’s go for it.’” The result is a stunning fireplace-cum-media center-cum-almost-mirror, “polished to the degree where you actually get a reflection,” explains Materanek. “Because the perimeter is also lit from behind, it completely softens the room.”

As for design issues, Armstrong acknowledges a firm trust in his decorator’s “very masculine” sense of style—the



TOP: In the master bedroom is a photograph of the cyclist and his daughter Bella. ABOVE: The painting by Antonio Más over the bed established the room’s palette. “I’ve always liked contemporary art,” says Armstrong. McGuire lamps. O. Henry House chairs, with Rogers & Goffigon fabric. Dedar bedcovering and bolster fabric; Glant headboard fabric. Drapery silk from Duralee; Great Plains sheer.



ABOVE: A fireplace warms the pool cabana, which is lit by Gothic-style lanterns.

perfect foil for his own love of the dark side. “Black isn’t a color,” he chuckles, “but if it were, it’s my favorite. When our two elements come together, great stuff happens—like my study with its ebonized wood and leather floors, the bathroom’s ebonized-white-oak panels and stone floor; even the game room’s ebonized ceiling—all very masculine.”

Still, it’s the art—contemporary, each piece ferreted out by the owner—that really catches the eye. “I buy based on what I like—or don’t. If a piece pulls you in, to me that says ‘art’ ... deserving of a place in your home. When I go to an exhibit, people’s first reaction is usually: ‘What the hell is he doing here?’ But when you ask questions, start buying, they concede, ‘Maybe he does know what he’s doing.’”

To encourage the budding palettes of his

children, Armstrong asked them to design their own bedrooms. “They picked out everything—wallpaper, art, colors—blue for Grace, pink for Bella. Since my son, then

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five, wanted life-size dinosaurs on his walls, we got an artist to draw them. After she finished, I said to Luke: ‘Check out this T. rex.’ And he said, ‘It’s not. A T. rex doesn’t have three fingers.’ Sure enough, she’d added a finger. So I called and said, ‘Bad news. We

gotta get one of these fingers off this dinosaur fast.’”

In the end, Materanek clearly delivered exactly what Armstrong wanted. “When I walk into that house, I heave a sigh of relief: I am home. I take off my shoes, walk around barefoot, just feeling the rugs, floors. Home is very private; here, nobody’s going to mess with me. It’s a very comforting feeling, which Roy gets. Having known each other for 13 years, we’d already been through a lot together when his wife’s death from cancer a couple years ago brought the friendship to a whole other level. I can’t thank him enough.”

He pauses. “When their mom and I split, the kids and I moved around a bunch. But that’s over. This time I said, ‘You will graduate from high school in this house. I promise. Dad’s not moving again.’” □

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