

Built to fit you

Learn to work with architects and view 10 custom-designed homes on tour



Paul Bardagly
A large stone staircase unites the upstairs office and downstairs home of this FAB Architecture house at 3219 Bridle Path.



In this vaulted east-facing bedroom on Bridle Path, the high window captures morning light and creates a dramatic effect all day.

By **Katy Barron**
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Lincoln Logs and Mike Brady might be the depth of your knowledge about architecture (Remember? Mr. Brady of "The Brady Bunch" fame was an architect), but an elementary understanding of the art shouldn't keep you away from the upcoming American Institute of Architects home tour.

The annual tour, sponsored by the Austin chapter, gives the public a chance to peek inside one-of-a-kind homes designed by local architects. This year's tour includes a new feature: a public lecture series meant to demystify the process of working with a professional architect and to fight the concept that only the rich and famous can afford one, says Sally Ann Fly, the chapter's executive director. Fly is passionate about architecture and its impact on the community, from urban planning to the design of a local Jiffy Mart.

"People view it as a service that's not for them, while in some way or another everything has been touched by an architect," she says.

Award-winning architect Lawrence Speck of Lawrence W. Speck Associates, a professor at the University of Texas School of Architecture, kicked off the series Saturday with a brief lesson in how to look at and interpret architecture. The show stoppers, 10 custom-built homes designed by members of AIA Austin, will be on display Oct. 2 and 3.

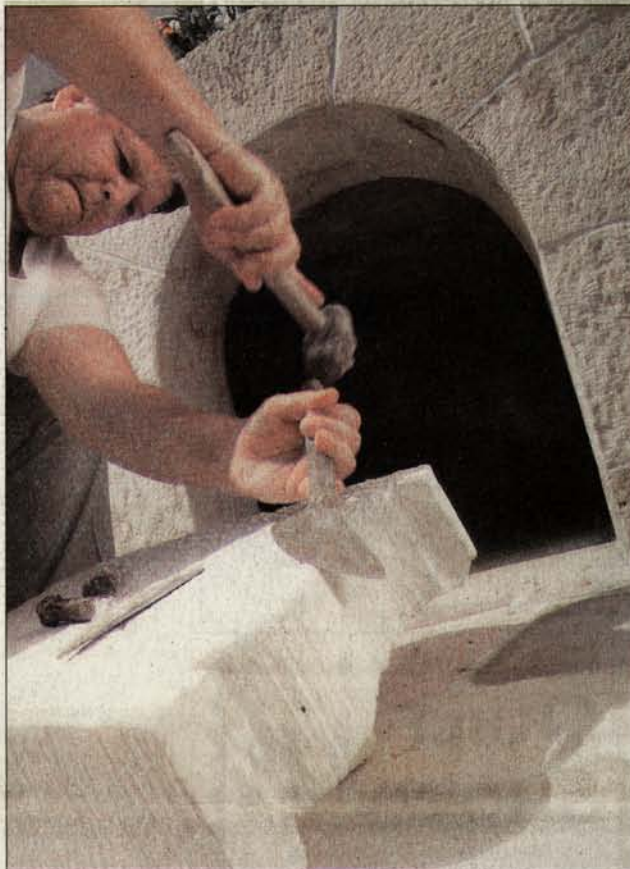
After being inspired by the houses, tour ticket holders can delve into the particulars of the design process at an Oct. 16 lecture called "20 Questions: Working with an Architect."

We came up with some questions of our own for a few of the architects featured in this year's tour: Michael Antenora of Antenora Architects; husband-and-wife team Patrick Ousey and Pam Chandler of FAB Architecture; and architect and consultant E. Logan Wagner.

Austin American-Statesman: How do you go about determining the client's expectations — especially if the client doesn't really know what he or she wants?

Michael Antenora: In residential architecture, the key to a successful project is determining and managing expectations. Our motto speaks for itself: Architecture is 95

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Architect E. Logan Wagner hand carves stone for his remodel of 1000 Jousting Place. He is known for his use of traditional materials and craftsmanship while remodeling.

AIA PHOTOS



At the Antenora Architects-designed home at 1900 W. 41st St., eastern light fills the kitchen, breakfast nook, dining room and breezeway.



The "hard courtyard" at the home on West 41st Street is designed for eating and entertaining as well as a place for children to play.



The front entry porch at West 41st Street interweaves colors and materials to mimic the outdoor landscaping in an eclectic design.

American Institute of Architects Austin Home Tour

What: Self-guided 2004 tour, featuring 10 custom homes designed by local architects
When: Noon to 6 p.m., Oct. 2-3

Also: A public lecture, "20 Questions: Working with an Architect," will be held from 10 a.m. to noon Oct. 16 at Big Red Sun, 1102 E. Cesar Chavez St. and is included in the cost of the tour.

Tickets: \$25; available online at www.aiaaustin.org or by calling 452-4332. Tickets can be purchased during the tour at individual homes and at the AIA Austin office at 503 W. 38th St.

TOUR: Architects' little secret? No job is too small

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percent about people and 5 percent about the building. Often I apply the old adage, "A picture is worth a thousand words." I suggest clients start a clip file (of images from home-design magazines) and start sticking Post-It notes on things they like. Sometimes they may not even know why they like the picture.

We can ask them the right questions to determine that. That's the quickest way for me to understand their taste and, in some ways, what kind of mood they're trying to create.

Patrick Ousey and Pam Chandler of FAB: Most people understand their needs. We draw out how they live. You don't always understand (your lifestyle) as unique to yourself. We ask questions like, "Do you



Michael Antenora



Patrick Ousey



Pam Chandler



E. Logan Wagner

eat as a family? Are kids in the picture? Do you cook or entertain? Are you gardeners? Morning people? Are you a clothes horse, a bath person?"

We once asked a client if she had any images of things she loved or things she wanted her house to feel like. She brought her grandmother's Venetian glass necklace to us and said, "If you could make this project feel like

this I would be so happy," and in the end it really did have that feeling.

Explain the process of working with an architect. How much of a time commitment is expected from the client?

Antenora: The scope of work is different on every project. A custom residential home takes about a year. AIA firms have standard contracts that set up project phases, including pre-design, schematic design, design development, construction drawings, bidding and negotiation, and contract administration. Pre-design is the act of gathering information that helps determine how the house sits on the property. Owners typically provide the survey, which may include a tree layout or a topographical analysis. ... We also use this phase to set up a written program that says "Here's what you're asking me to provide." One of the firmest foundations to building a solid relationship with an architect is to have a really good contract — with as little ambiguity as possible.

E. Logan Wagner: It takes about one to two meetings a week in the beginning. Meetings can last anywhere from two to four hours. Some clients are more involved than others. It's very satisfactory when everyone is working in a harmonious way like that.

What do you wish your clients knew about the process before they got into it?

Antenora: A) It's difficult. B) They have to be involved. C) Trust. I think the best possible chance of success is when you think of it as a collaboration. When you're going into a house project, you need to trust your architect that they know what they're doing. It's OK to not know as much as they know. It's important for clients to let us do what we do well. That's really where the "gems" come in. ... the yield is a whole that's greater than the sum of its parts.

FAB: That it takes a lot of



Mell Lawrence Architect's house in the WatersMark gated community brings stone and metal qualities of an old home into a new house.



AIA PHOTOS

McKinney Architects kept the feel and scale of a bungalow at 1602 Hartford Road while transforming both the exterior and interior.

time. We're not reaching into a drawer and pulling out a plan. Sometimes ideas need to stew for a long time. We don't want to rush the finish and compromise the end result. Building is an organic process. Once you're in the field, things can move around a bit.

What's the biggest benefit of using an architect for a new home over buying one that's already on the market?

FAB: Customizing your home to your life. We overlay your life on a home designed for you as opposed to adapting your life to a home that already exists. Architects also consider the site, things like the angle that light hits the home, adjacent neighbors and views.

Wagner: What you're going to find in the market, generally, is standard 2-by-4 construction

with Sheetrock and package designs that really don't apply to the site or to you. You can go download a floor plan somewhere, but it's not something that's designed for your needs or for the site specifications or the region. There are a lot of buildings, but not much architecture. Ultimately, it's very expensive to build, so if you're going to make the investment of energy and money, make it count.

AIA says "good architecture can be possible for everyone, regardless of your budget." What's realistic in terms of budget?

FAB: Architects can be a luxury, but we can tailor our services for any kind of budget. We do a lot of work for folks that's in a small amount. People that "get it" understand that it's important to get a professional's

input — even for something as small as placing some interior light fixtures. Central Austin neighborhoods (in particular) are important to us. We'd rather see work that is well-done and that is suited to the neighborhood and the house than something atrocious that is not going to have staying power. (Low-budget jobs) are challenging, but we embrace Austin and appreciate the pay-back of seeing a home renovation done well.

Wagner: You don't have to spend a fortune. In a well-designed building, (cost savings) aren't manifest upfront but they are through time — like in the performance, maintenance and cost of running the building. You have to ask yourself, "Will your building still exist in 60 years, in 100 years? Is that important?" These are intrinsic values that architects have training in and will undoubtedly save the client money in the long run. These values are hard to quantify in dollars and cents, but you know it when you feel it and when you see it.

What measures are put in place to ensure that projects are completed on time and on budget?

FAB: There's really no insurance, but there are contracts that provide incentives for finishing early. Clients usually want repercussions if something isn't done. What they have to understand is that it's a two-way street. You can't punish people financially if you're also not willing to reward them for finishing early. You have to consider that we're creating something we've never made before. Weather, subcontractors, suppliers — there are a lot of things your contractor may not have control over.

Antenora: The client can involve the architect after design work is done in a couple of ways. One level is called "construction observation" where the architect is hired to ensure that the house is being built according to the drawings. Contract administration includes a more agentlike relationship in which the owner is paying the architect to represent him in dealings with the contractor, including payment. I recommend that clients use a contract option to ensure there's motivation to finish the project, such as retaining 10 percent of the contract amount as leverage. The architect is an objective third party and can protect both the owner and the contractor.

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