



"We took a minimalist approach to the patio spaces surrounding the pool," explains Telepsen Landscaping designer Michael Hernandez. "We created just enough space for good furniture, outdoor grilling and general transitional walking spaces that connect both the home and the studio in a graceful manner."



From top: Large expanse of windows and glass patio doors intentionally bring in abundant natural light for Saefler's photographs; an Outdoor wood screen acts as a privacy screen in the design of the studio porch, which offers some privacy from the street.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Houston photographer Julie Saefler's idyllic outdoor oasis is shared between her family home and her photo studio. Here, architect Natalie Appel and Telepsen Landscaping's Michael Hernandez tell the story of the space.

THE CONCEPT NA: The clients were looking for a beautiful and functional site to support their live-work lifestyle, with a good amount of relaxation and entertainment space. Our vision was for a private oasis that allowed for a separate studio entry for work, and strong connectivity between the existing home and new studio. Our site plan used the existing trees and new pool to create the zones, and we planned the studio porch and entry to make the most of the concept.

THE TEAM NA: For the studio, it was myself and architects Stephanie Millet and Megan Shelly; Jana Erwin and Audrey Moore of NEST Design Group; Brad Dougherty of Insight Structures; Karen Rose Engineering & Surveying; the late Mark Sconneau and Michael Hernandez of Telepsen Landscaping; and general contractor Ondesene Mouton of Steve Construction.

THE MATERIALS NA: The studio facade is stucco and the roof is a traditional tile to match the existing historic district home.

MH: Our involvement in material selection for the outdoor living spaces ranged from fencing to hardscaping and softscapes. The client material and landscape design follow the same concept that the fencing and hardscaping did: minimal, clean, simple and modern.

We used more ornamental grasses in sunny areas, and shade-tolerant ground covers in areas that lacked sunlight. We played with a variety of textures and colors that enhanced the outdoor living spaces. We also designed a loose "screen" hedge along the driveway to help screen the adjacent neighbor's tall home. The plant palette proposed was hardy, low maintenance and could handle Houston's rough soil conditions.

THE CHALLENGE MH: Houston weather and soil dictate any site's possible plant materials. We have a "Houston-proof" plant list that has proven itself in our local climate and soil conditions over the years.

NA: The studio porch allows use of the pool and entry in rain or shine, and all materials are selected for durability in our humid climate. Houston soils are terrible for construction, so Insight designed a structural slab on deep-dilled piers, which is not dependent on soil capacity for structural integrity.

THE OUTCOME NA: Design, historic district and permit approvals and construction were completed within two years. I have been lucky enough to enjoy two parties [on-site]. The outdoor space worked beautifully for everyone, to gather around long tables of food, as well as relax in smaller conversation groups around the pool.

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From top: Large extents of windows and glass patio doors intentionally bring in abundant natural light for Soefer's photography; an Outdeco wood screen was incorporated into the design of the studio gates, which offer some privacy from the street.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Houston photographer Julie Soefer's idyllic outdoor oasis is shared between her family home and her photo studio. Here, architect Natalye Appel and Tellepsen Landscaping's Michael Hernandez tell the story of the space.

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