

SANTA FE MODERN

THE LAND OF ENCHANTMENT LURES DALLAS EXPATS TO THEIR
NEWLY CONSTRUCTED DWELLING WITH MOUNTAIN VIEWS.



BY PEGGY LEVINSON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIEL NADELBACH





For many Texas collectors there is one longed-for residential move—to be surrounded by art, both natural and manmade, within an inspired community of kindred spirits. “Get thee to Santa Fe” says the artistic muse—and that is exactly what Alan Kagan and his husband Eduardo did just recently after visiting for many years.

Kagan, a modernist builder and art collector, called on Dallas-based Far + Dang Architects with whom he had worked on projects in Urban Reserve, and his own considerable experience as the founder of Dwellings...A Kagan Company, to build their dream house in Santa Fe. For the site-specific landscape he collaborated with Patrick Dickinson, a horticulturalist who works in Dallas for Texas A&M Agrilife Research and Extension Center.

The house, built in a boomerang shape, arcs around the living areas facing the mountains. The roof cantilevers out to create deep decks furnished with multiple seating areas from Richard Schultz for Knoll to enjoy the views with sliding doors that offer an idyllic indoor/outdoor living experience. Bollard lighting creates a beautiful walkway to the front door, and vertical aluminum posts create an entry courtyard but still allow for views from the living room. The house was obviously built to take full advantage of the famed New Mexico sky. “I was struck the first time I saw the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and knew I wanted to be able to see them in all lights, at different times of the day,” Kagan expresses.

Kagan’s collecting obsession began years ago. “My initial collection began with Roseville Pottery, which I discovered in estate sales and antique stores in Atlanta in the mid 1970s. Although they produced many other lines, I was struck by Donatello.” The Donatello pattern, featuring pastel glazes with raised images of cherubic children, was introduced from Europe and only produced in the early 1900s in Janesville, Ohio. The search process was slow before the Internet and Google and he recalls, “Each time I would find one it was like finding a treasure.”

Like most art enthusiasts, treasure hunting typically spawns new collections. “When I see something, any art form that peaks my interest, I typically buy it—travel especially gives me the opportunity to explore different cultures. While living in Southeast Asia, I was struck by the simplicity and beauty of Japanese design, and I began to notice Japanese masks—I began a mask collection from Japan, Bali, and Mexico. And while on a recent trip to Amsterdam we stumbled upon a toyshop filled with ‘designer toys.’ Hence the beginning of a toy collection.”

Kagan began perusing galleries all over the Dallas area in the 1980s before there was a real gallery district. He also went to galleries in Denison, Texas. “At one time Denison was being promoted as a new Santa Fe.”

At a gallery opening in Deep Ellum, he discovered Lionel Maunz, a young art student at Southern Methodist University, and bought an early abstract of a horse and rider. Maunz now lives and works in New York where his figurative dystopian sculptures were exhibited at MoMA PS1 in 2016.

The Estelle Meyers Gallery on Cedar Springs sometimes had special sales of artwork from corporate moves. He bought an abstract from the Dutch artist Arie Van Selm at one of those sales, long before he was a sought-after artist represented by Gerald Peters Gallery. His early acquisitions have stood the test of time and remain some of his favorites today.

And all this art, stunning views, and the home itself need an audience. The house was built for entertaining, old friends flock to







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visit and enjoy Santa Fe, and new friendships are always made in this friendly, social town. Kagan enjoys cooking in the custom kitchen he had fabricated by the same artisans he uses for houses he builds in Dallas. The living areas flow into each other and are connected outside by the extended decks. Classic modern furniture pieces create separate seating areas, all taking advantage of different views of the conjoining Jemez and Sangre de Cristo mountain ranges in the distance.

The den yields more art—a vibrant red abstract by Dion Johnson from Holly Johnson Gallery hangs over a B&B Italia sofa with midcentury chairs recovered in rich purple velvet. The colors seem to mirror the sunset. The living room presents a different view of the mountains and has a seating area with four Corbusier chairs and an animal skin rug; the focal point is a painting of a giant jade plant by Theo Wujok from Galleri Urbane in Dallas. The vertical aluminum posts outside the entry courtyard reflect and create a kaleidoscopic view of the dramatic landscape.

Whimsical touches and favorite art objects abound throughout the house: as a crawling-man wire sculpture by Chris Mason from Craighead Green faces an orange squirrel outside the window in the living room. In the dining room, a running-man sculpture in painted plaster is by the French-born Dallas-based artist Phillippe Semp. An ephemeral tree sculpture by Shane Pennington stands



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alone at the end of a long hallway. *Last Embrace* by Robert Yarber was purchased at an estate auction at Talley Dunn.

In the master bathroom are works by James Gilbert of dreamlike transparency where a delicate white dress and man's shirt and pants appear like shadows on the wall. Solid blue bricks mounted form a rectangle offering an interesting installation in the office. One brick stands apart and leaves an empty space. "This represents dyslexia to the artist Eric McGehearty—words that jump out and don't appear in the right order to the dyslexic eye," says Kagan. Also in the office is a Plexiglas work, *Untitled* by Loring Toaka from Galleri Urbane.

The pair buys what they like and seems to have an unerring eye for good design. Iconic pieces like an Eames chair and the Corbusier chairs mix well with other modern furniture they have acquired through the years. Biedermeier dining chairs purchased thirty-five years ago at a defunct furniture store in Dallas surround a dining table from Cantoni. The spare lines of the furniture let the art and views take center stage.

Though Kagan is completing a multi-family project and a custom build for a client in Dallas, he avers, "We are now in Santa Fe lock, stock, and barrel. There's a vortex of some sort here. We love the diversity of the people, and the sun shines 300 days a year. There is a reason they call this the Land of Enchantment," he proffers. **P**