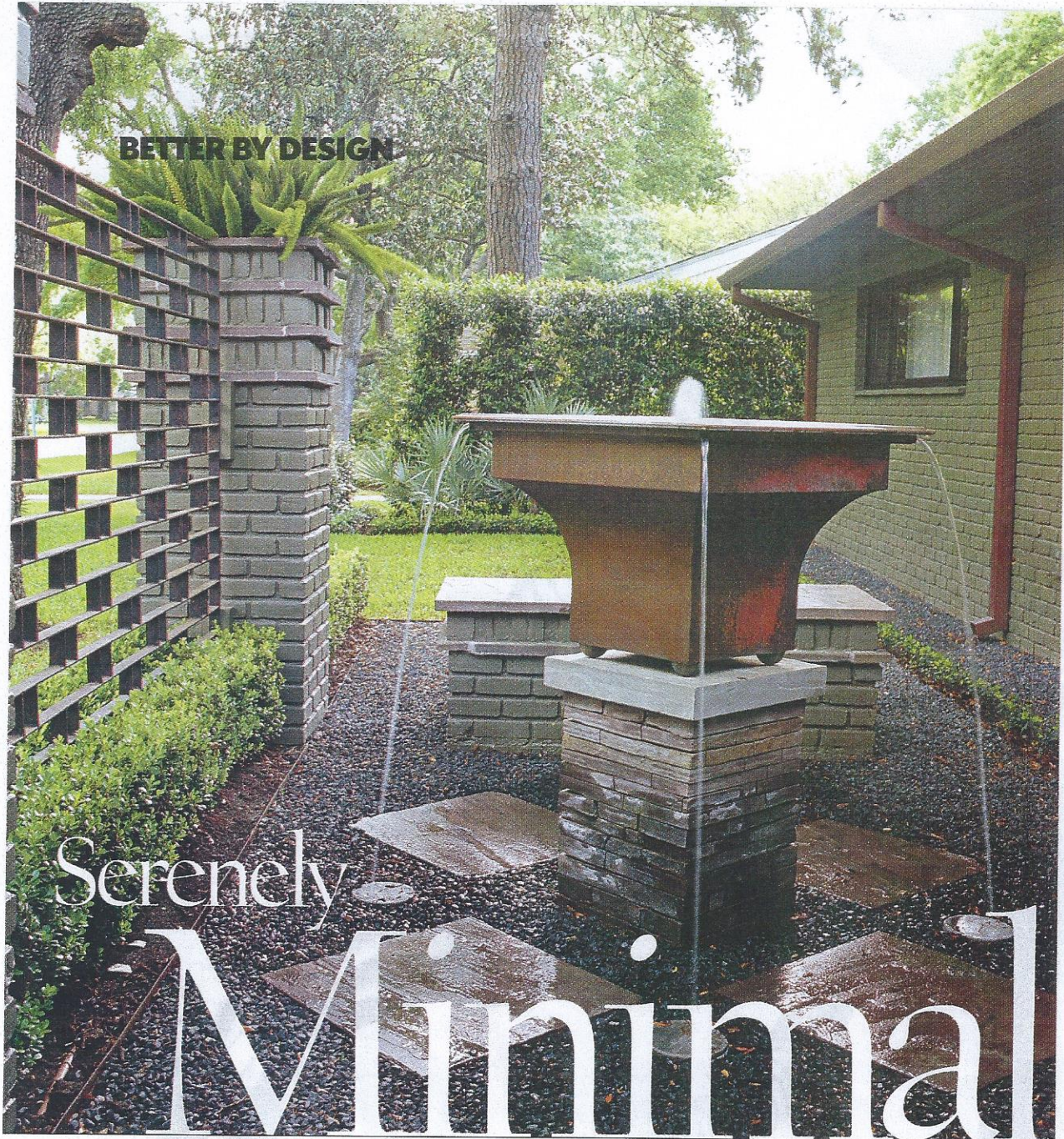


BETTER BY DESIGN



Serenely  
Minimal



LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT  
MARK MCKINNON GAVE THE  
OWNERS OF THIS HOUSTON  
GARDEN A CALM SANCTUARY TO  
ENTERTAIN FRIENDS AND FAMILY.

The sculptural copper fountain (*above and left*) in the entry court greets guests with the soothing sound of splashing water. The metal grate affords a sense of enclosure while allowing a curbside view of the fountain.

PRODUCED AND WRITTEN BY THOMAS CIESLA PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD FELBER



BETTER BY DESIGN >> from Z20

W

hen Rex Adams and Tod Lindholm acquired their 1950s ranch-style home, the interiors had been renovated but the landscaping hadn't been touched. "The yard was dull, to put it mildly," Rex says, "so we

turned to Mark McKinnon, hoping he and his associates could transform the ordinary into the luxurious."

Work began in the summer of 2002, and high on the homeowners' wish list was overhauling the front entry, which was "dark and tiresome," according to Rex. "I wanted it to be brighter, to include a water >> on Z24

In the meditation garden (above), stone flooring, potted plants, and drip irrigation ensure the owners have a nurturing, low-upkeep space. Fig ivy upholsters the walls with its cooling green foliage. A stacked stone fountain (left) anchors one end of the garden; its mellow sounds block out those of the surrounding city.





# RESTRAINT IN THE LANDSCAPE GIVES US THE SERENITY WE WANTED.

—REX ADAMS



## BETTER BY DESIGN >> from Z22

element, and offer a sense of privacy from the street.” To achieve this, McKinnon raised the original low roof over the stoop to brighten the space and added two brick columns to support a metal grate wall and new courtyard doors.

The small size of the entry court called for an understated fountain. McKinnon’s design—as much a minimalist copper sculpture as a fountain—activates without overwhelming the space.

The owners’ needs for the narrow rear yard—low maintenance, minimal color accents, a pool, and a separate pet area—formed McKinnon’s design challenge. He divided the rear yard into two distinct areas, a people side and a pet side, separated by a low, unobtrusive fence.

As owners of several West Highland White terriers, Rex and Tod wanted an area that was large enough for the dogs to run and play. McKinnon combined hardscaping with a lawn area for the dogs to romp, and softened the impact of the fence with plantings. A doggie door from a utility area in the house allows the dogs to come and go as they please.

On the people side, McKinnon chose to emphasize the linear quality of the yard by combining stone walks, gravel beds, and a lap pool. “I raised the pool above grade to lend a sculptural quality to it,” he explains, “and placed a >> on Z26

The pergola (*above*) provides shade for the terriers and adds an interesting architectural element to the rear yard. Confederate jasmine trained on cable ornaments the fence with green diamonds all year and gives an extended spring season of small fragrant white flowers. “The pet area had to be aesthetically pleasing and complement the rest of the yard,” says Rex Adams (*left*). The elegantly simple wire fence separates the two areas without overpowering the yard.



**BETTER BY DESIGN** >> from Z24

masonry wall at the far end to serve as a backdrop for a simple fountain that adds motion and sound.” By controlling the water volume flowing from the fountain, the sound can be changed from a high-pitched trickle to a deep, throaty rush of water.

McKinnon, an accomplished gardener as well as landscape designer, says every plant selection was made with a specific purpose in mind, “for silhouette, for contrast in texture, or for underscoring the structure of the garden. The composition is deliberately minimal, not layer upon layer, or texture upon texture, but with a simplicity that helps achieve the goal of a peaceful, comforting sanctuary. The concept of minimalism seems a little >> on Z28

Viewed from the covered patio, the rear yard (above) is a study in linear geometry. The masonry wall in the background conceals equipment for the pool, spa, and fountain. The floor tiles used in the covered patio (left) extend to the pool and pet areas to seamlessly tie all functional zones into the whole.

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## RESOURCES

SOME OF THE PRODUCTS SHOWN EDITORIALY IN THE BETTER BY DESIGN SECTION OF *BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS*® MAGAZINE CAN BE OBTAINED LOCALLY. FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT THE MANUFACTURERS LISTED BELOW.

### VIEWS OF SERENITY

**Pages Z1-Z16:** **architect**—Tolkin + Byram & Assoc., 41 W. Bellevue Dr., Pasadena, CA 91105; 626/356-0443. **Structural engineer**—Joseph Perazzelli, 183 Greenfield Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90049; 310/476-8892. **General contractor**—A-1 Construction Co., 10650 Overman Ave., Chatsworth, CA 91311; 818/709-4341. **Aluminum windows throughout**—Metal Window Corp.; 323/776-1383. **Colored concrete**—L.M. Scofield Co.; 323/720-3000.

**Pages Z2-Z3:** **pool**—Tolkin + Byram & Assoc. (address above). **Landscape designer**—Wade Graham, Landscape Studio; 323/664-2104.

**All other items**—antique, discontinued, or personal belonging.

**Pages Z4-Z8:** **all items**—discontinued, or personal belonging.

**Page Z10:** **range; hood; refrigerator**—Viking Range Corp.; 888/845-4641; Web site: [www.vikingrange.com](http://www.vikingrange.com).

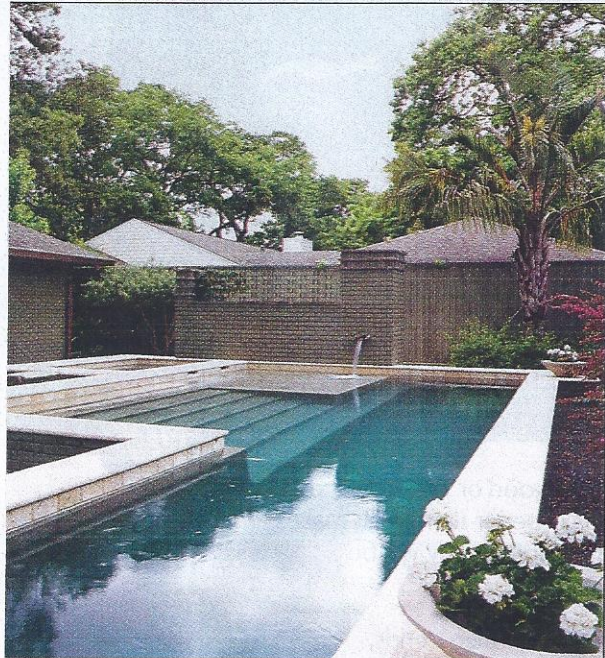
**Page Z12:** **all items**—antique, discontinued, or personal belonging.

**Page Z14:** **tub, "Artesia"**—Martin Lane; 310/274-1231. **Fixture**—Ferguson Enterprises, Inc.; 818/786-4002.

**Page Z16:** **all items**—antique, discontinued, or personal belonging.

### SERENELY MINIMAL

**Pages Z20-Z28:** **landscape architect**—Mark McKinnon, McKinnon Associates, 1137 W. 26th St., Houston, TX 77008; 713/869-2797; [www.mckinnonassociates.com](http://www.mckinnonassociates.com).



In this highly accommodating pool (above), a wide rectangle meets an elongated one to create two distinct activity zones. The shallow side allows for lounging, while the 10-foot-deep lap side assures cold water even during Houston's tropical summers.

### BETTER BY DESIGN >> from Z26

scary to some people, but here in this urban yard, it has turned out to be more rather than less."

During the renovation, an addition to the front of the garage created a small side yard that can be viewed from the kitchen window. McKinnon transformed the space into a meditation garden. The variety of materials, textures, and patterns is a marked departure from the simple lines of the overall landscape, yet the area feels quietly Zenlike.

"Sitting in the garden on a sunny morning, surrounded by plants and the soothing sound of the fountain," Rex says, "you would never know you were right in the middle of the fourth largest city in America." ☺