

# Texas Architect

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*Curry Boudreaux Architects*  
STEPHEN SHARPE



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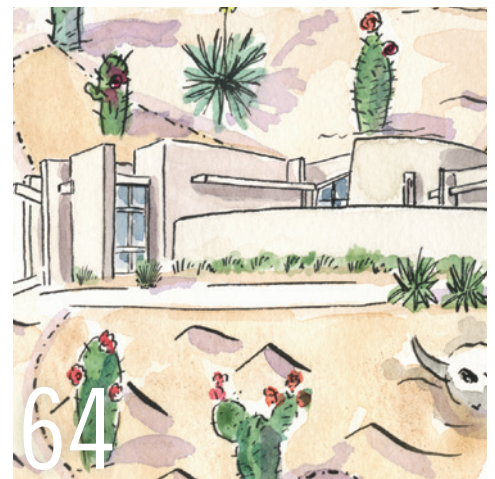
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For the Connally Lodge in Dallas, Michael Malone, AIA, fused a Hill Country material palette with a crisp modernist design.

# Buy Local

Regional vernacular comes home as market adopts contemporary idiom

A recent article in the real estate section of the *Austin American-Statesman* called attention to a growing demand among homebuyers for “Texas contemporary.” The interest is such that even production homebuilders are beginning to introduce spec models patterned after the regional vernacular of the Hill Country. Refined rather than rustic and Texan rather than Tuscan, the archetype represents an updated take on traditional styles yet a softer version of the modernist box. The demand has noticeably affected the suburban housing market in Austin.

The reach of “Texas contemporary” — known also as “Hill Country modern,” among other labels — extends at least as far north as Dallas where Michael Malone, AIA, recently completed a house for clients who originally asked him to design a mountain lodge for their suburban lot. He explained to them that their idea might be not be appropriate for the climate of North Texas, and instead suggested a more region-specific response—shading the exterior walls with deep overhangs and minimizing the size of windows while placing the openings to maximize the amount of natural light. The material palette — native limestone for walls and floors, standing-seam metal for

roof and fascia, and heavy timber post-and-beam structure expressed throughout — harkens back to the pioneer days of Texas, albeit rigorously assembled as a contemporary version of regional vernacular.

Several factors seem to be driving this return to a local idiom. One is the rise of the creative class, that emergent demographic segment where livelihoods revolve around the arts, design, and information media. As consumers, they don’t follow the mainstream culture, possessing instead a design sensibility that rejects trends. A second factor is an enlightened application of the eco-friendly incantation “think globally, act locally” that already extends to grocers and restaurateurs whose customers are asking them to “buy local.” In theory, localized food production reduces the amount of fuel required to deliver the goods while also offering some assurance about their source.

Consumers of architectural services are equally hungry for assurance that their project responds in a positive way to the pressures of rising energy costs and strains on the earth’s resources. Architects have the answers.

STEPHEN SHARPE