

Once unlivable home transformed into stylish Oak Cliff space

11:23 PM CDT on Wednesday, June 4, 2008

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A cozy, masculine feeling is at the heart of the Oak Cliff home of Jason Lenox and [Matthew Taylor](#). An oversized fireplace stands sentinel in the living room, surrounded by modern Santa Fe artwork and rich chocolate-leather furnishings. In the library, old England reigns with walls painted tobacco brown and trimmed in black. The colors are backdrop to a massive collection of silver trophies, antique fishing reels, animal-hoof ashtrays from the Adirondacks and antique corkscrews, among others.

The home is civilized in every sense of the word, though this wasn't always the case. It took a true love of the hunt for these two to tame the place they now call home.

The 1950 house by renowned Dallas architect Charles Dilbeck, who designed storybook properties in Dallas and Fort Worth over a 40-year career, had been a rental property for many years. By the time the guys got there, it was a wreck.

"When we bought it, there was a hole in the floor straight down to the dirt. It was so bad the mortgage company deemed it uninhabitable," Mr. Taylor says.

"We did everything you could do to this place."

There was no access to the back yard, a shame since it overlooks the rolling terrain of Stevens Park Golf Course.

The kitchen was a cramped galley with odd appliance placement, and the house had only one bathroom, which was immediately gutted. (Mr. Taylor, 6 feet 4 inches tall, couldn't fit in the original shower.) The only thing spared was the fireplace.

"Dilbeck was known for his big, overscaled fireplaces," says Mr. Lenox, who helps run his family's Anteks furniture shop on Lovers Lane. "It's really the only sign that this could be a Dilbeck. We really didn't have any other of his quirky touches."

That didn't stop the couple from adding a quirk of their own. It takes a minute to notice it, but there is an owl motif running through the property.

In the fireplace, vintage owl andirons with glowing amber eyes guard the flame; up on the chimney cap, two owl cutouts do the same; a painting of an owl is included in a wall of framed artwork. But the biggest owl of all is in the back yard – in the form of a totem pole.

A 30-foot, 200-year-old cedar tree decided it had battled its last storm last summer and snapped off, toppling onto the chimney.

Photos



Courtney Perry / DMN Staff

Jason Lenox considers the study in his home his space; it's where he keeps his collections of silver trophies, antique fishing reels and antique corkscrews, among other masculine odds and ends.

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"But rather than pull it out of the ground, we decided to do something cool with it," Mr. Lenox says.

They hired an Oklahoma City woodworker to create a totem that told the story of the house and its inhabitants.

An acorn is for Oak Cliff, the beaver is symbolic of Mr. Lenox's family home at Beaver Lake in northern New Jersey. There is a Georgia peach, signifying Mr. Taylor's roots; it is, of course, in the talons of an owl.

"We've had a whole family of owls live in our trees," Mr. Lenox explains.

They were at once taken with the birds. The men came to admire the birds for their kind, strong and noble nature, a metaphor for how they hope other people view their home.

"We hope no one feels we have a pretentious home or an austere home," says Mr. Lenox.

"When people come over for cocktails, we hope they don't look for a coaster."

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