



AT HOME AND IN STYLE

Husband and wife architects blend their unique tastes to transform their Rollingwood residence

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MEET THE HOMEOWNERS

WORK

■ **Him:** In 1991 joins Gwathmey Siegel & Associates Architects LLC in New York City, where his projects include the Dell family's Austin residence. Since 2000, principal, Miró Rivera Architects Inc.
■ **Her:** Founding business partner, Miró Rivera Architects. Responsible for business development, administration and accounting.

GLOBETROTTING

■ **Her:** Born in Puerto Rico, studied in New York City and Austin.
"Drop us anywhere on the globe, and Juan and I are going to be happy."
■ **Him:** Born in Barcelona, raised in Madrid, fell in love with Rivera in New York City.
"I never lived in a house or owned a car until I came to Austin."
■ **Him on their Madrid apartment:** "Our place is in the heart of the city, across the street from the Prado Museum and the Reina Sofia [National Museum]. It's in an old building that was completely renovated. Fifth floor, two bedrooms, two baths, balconies, close to everything."
■ **Her on Madrid:** "I first went to Madrid at 15 and promised myself I'd live there one day."

INSIDE SCOOP

■ **He loves:** Soccer (avid Real Madrid fan; plays weekly for the Chez Nous team) and chocolate milk for breakfast.
■ **She loves:** Houseguests and their bedroom's new electric blinds.



THE FAMILY

JUAN MIRÓ: 41 | ROSA RIVERA: 33
DIEGO: 6 | DANIELA: 3

Is asking a woman to give up her closet a reasonable request? Is making a room smaller downright un-Texan? Not in the Miró-Rivera field, where conventionality takes a backseat to style, design and function.

And so it was that Rosa Rivera, who's never seen a kitchen utensil she hasn't adored, gleefully ditched her dresses and scrapped her shoe racks. Four projects later, she has her closet back, as the gregarious co-founders of Miró-Rivera Architects reshape their '70s-era Scandinavian-style home to reflect their lifestyle and aesthetics.

Shaking off their big-city ways when they hit Austin from Madrid via New York to be project architects on Michael Dell's home, Rivera and her husband, Juan Miró, happily settled in sedate suburban Rollingwood. "We knew [the home] had good bones," explains Miró, of the now 3,000-square-foot home set on a leafy one-third-acre lot. He points out the row of high windows and soaring ceilings of the reception area, which flow left and right into the sitting and dining rooms. The couple loved the shade-inducing overhangs, the northern aspect and the floor plan. Still, much work lay ahead.

First up was the conversion of the garage — initially into a spacious, self-contained office with a mezzanine, later into a lofty multipurpose family room with a second-story guest suite. "We call that the *palomar*, or pigeon loft," laughs Puerto Rican-born Rivera.

Miró did his homework before buying. "I saw there was a lot of volume in the attic not being used," he says. They've added 900 square feet by reclaiming the attic. Efficiency is key. It's almost as important as family.

"We can all be doing different things, yet be together. I like working with a lot of people around me," explains Miró, one of seven siblings. "Rosa and I are very home-oriented, and we like to be with the kids." He's a night owl, often working after the couple's two young children are in bed.

"I draw only by hand," says Miró, who worked with his architect father before heading to Yale on a Fulbright scholarship in 1989.

While the family room is his favorite, the kitchen gets her vote. "I work full time, but I always have home-cooked meals," explains Rivera. "I even make my own yogurt. I bring food to the office, and I love giving dinner parties."

Each summer, Rivera and her kids, Diego and Daniela, make a trip to the family's Madrid apartment, leaving the house strangely silent for months. This is out of the ordinary. Rivera says her house is loud. "There's going to be music — depending on what I'm cooking, anything from salsa to merengue to rap to hip-hop," she says.

Rivera says unbidden, hungry friends often drop in late. And that's fine. "Whoever comes, there's food. I always cook for a battalion."

With her detailed must-have list in the kitchen, including the custom island that hides multiple outlets and

two capacious drawers designed to hold her purses and the kids' backpacks, "Rosa was the toughest client I've ever had," says Miró. "But that was good; she knew what she wanted."

Moving the sink out of the room's traffic flow, they replaced it with a cozy breakfast nook. Within easy reach is the bread station, designed to satisfy Rivera's admitted fixation with beating crumbs. Now the slatted cutting board, with its oversized slide-out "crumb catcher," is behind cabinet doors.

Over the sink is a rack for draining hand-washed dishes — a common feature in Spanish kitchens. Slide open a drawer, and you'll find a place for the pencils that find their way home in a busy architect's pockets.

"Rosa is organized, and her taste reflects the desire for pure, clean lines and sophisticated, yet simple, designs," says friend Mary Yancy.

Miró and Rivera have surrounded themselves with art, adding a window by the sink to enjoy a view of a monumental piece by Mexican artist Jorge Yazpik. On the bedroom wall hangs a painting by Argentinean Luis Felipe Nué, a favorite artist of Rivera's. Purchased during a 10th wedding anniversary trip to Buenos Aires, the painting is appropriately titled "That's Life, My Wife."

The bedroom's wooden floor will extend into the dining and living rooms, home to more art. "The home's great contemporary art, including Latin and local artists, is a reflection of the owners; they are knowledgeable and passionate collectors," says Yancy.

The seductive lines of a wood sculpture by Spanish artist Paco Baron are exquisite. Above hang three paintings by Miró's sister, her wedding gift to the couple. They love to collect work by family and friends, and own two pieces by lauded Texas artist Julie Speed.

Hanging by the library is Miró's graduation gift to Rivera, a painting by Puerto Rican artist Juan Sanchez, the subject of her undergraduate thesis at New York's Barnard College at Columbia University.

Renewing the landscaping, adding a fountain and replacing the furniture in the backyard is their next project. They'll also strip the dark limestone facing to lighten the porches. The outdoor dining area seats 25 to 30 people, with celebrations happening year-round.

Elizabeth and John Pecore, owners of Austin's new P&K Grocery, have been frequent guests since Rivera and Elizabeth Pecore met the day their sons started preschool. The families spent last Thanksgiving together, starting the day with the Turkey Trot charity race, and lingering outside by the fire well into the night, recalls Elizabeth Pecore.

"Rosa does everything fresh, by hand, from scratch — just beautiful meals," Pecore says. Like many of their gatherings, it was a "very eclectic, interesting group. ... You can feel the happiness in their house. It's a very happy, warm, inviting place."