

JOHN BROOKS WALTON

TOMORROW'S HISTORIC TULSA HOMES





THE ARCHITECTURE OF BRIAN LLOYD FREESE

BRIAN L. FREESE knew he wanted to be an architect since the age of six. He still has the stock of 1960s *Architectural Digest* magazines his grandparents gave him and through which he poured for countless hours in his formative years. Freese credits his father, John Markham Freese, for a strong work ethic and his mother, Barbara Bearden Cole, with wiring his brain to be an architect. His mother wanted to be an architect when she was young, but the mathematics requirements were a bit intimidating. Barbara read all of Frank Lloyd Wright's books and hung geometric mobiles over young Brian's crib just as Wright's mother hung pictures of great architecture in his nursery.

Freese attended Tulane University and received his Bachelor of Architecture degree from the University of Oklahoma in 1984. In 1994, he established the firm of Brian Lloyd Freese Architecture.

opposite above: The Myra Sellers House

opposite below left: The spacious living room with exposed steel columns and beams

opposite below right: The double-layered roof with clerestory windows

THE MYRA SELLERS HOUSE 12336 SOUTH 49TH WEST AVENUE BUILT 2008

In 1996, Myra Sellers and her husband, attorney Bill Sellers, purchased 13 acres of land on the edge of Tulsa County. Bill constructed a small metal building on the crest of a hill on the property to serve as his hobby shop. It was never in their plans to build their home on the land although secretly, Myra harbored a fantasy to do just that. She studied articles about house design, saved clippings from magazines, and continued to review and update these files over the years. Tragically, Bill Sellers died. Afterwards, Myra renewed this dream to build her new home in the Oklahoma hills. In 2004, she engaged architect Brian L. Freese to design her dream home. She gave Freese her file of homes and ideas and a brief list of other needs and requirements. The first requirement was that the house be oriented to take in the views of the countryside and the magnificent Oklahoma sunsets. The house was to be modern in style, yet fit appropriately into the surrounding rural landscape. Finally, the living room must accommodate her grand piano and her collection of musical instruments.

The Sellers house is not large, yet it feels expansive and utterly sound. The interior has airy, open spaces that flow one to another. The focal point of the house is the living room with its soaring vaulted ceiling created by a double-layered roof with high clerestory windows. Massive exposed steel columns and beams frame the living room clerestory structure, which bolsters the house against strong winds that often persist in this open hilly terrain. When entering the house, one views the voluminous living room with its back wall made entirely of glass. The tall roofline and steel structure extend beyond the living room over a large porch. The effect is like a camera lens focusing and framing a view of a rural countryside. The exterior materials of the house are simple: stucco, split-faced concrete block, and a galvanized standing-seam metal roof. Carefully selected colors of the stucco and concrete block blend harmoniously with the wheat-toned grasses predominant in the landscape. In fact, the original specifications for the stucco mix required ground-up nearby field grasses incorporated into its composition.

"This home is truly a work of art."

—Myra Sellers



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THE MARK AND ANGELA SWIFT HOUSE 1027 NORTH 27TH WEST AVENUE BUILT 2009

After twenty-three years of a blissful life in a 1960s Ranch style home in the historic Maple Ridge District, Mark, his wife Angela, and their daughter, Kristen, decided they needed to live somewhere that would accommodate their "Tumble Bus." The Tumble Bus was a brightly painted former school bus, used as a tumbling gymnasium on wheels and the name of Angela's business she started in Tulsa. They knew their Maple Ridge neighbors simply would not permit such a vehicle parked in the driveway or, worse still, in the street.

The Swifts soon began the process of looking for property to build their dream home and a place where they could park the Tumble Bus. One day, Angela saw an advertisement in the real estate section in the newspaper for the sale of several acres near the Gilcrease Museum. The Swift's purchase of the seven and one-half acres of land soon took place. This property was irresistible with its undeveloped, heavily wooded areas that offered complete privacy.

opposite above: The Mark and Angela Swift House

opposite below: The dining room

Mark and Angela had specific ideas about the home of their dreams, and how Freese, as their architect, would assist them in achieving them. Freese was to use native materials to allow the house to fit naturally into the rough beauty of its surrounding landscape. It was to be modern yet connect to the surroundings with huge windows to provide sweeping views of their private natural world.

The Swift house features two low solid stone structures that align and connect with each other by a flat roofed glass entry. One enters the house looking directly through to the woodlands beyond. The smaller wing houses the master bedroom areas and a study. The larger wing mainly consists of a monumental wood timber and glass space that contains the living and dining room areas and the kitchen. A skylight spline creates a primary circulation corridor from the entry foyer to the public spaces and beyond to the guest room and service areas.

Predominate materials used on the Swift house are a local stone, wood post-and-beam construction, a metal roof, and lots and lots of glass. The natural sandstone on the house matches the huge sandstone outcroppings prevalent throughout the

property. The orientation of the Swift residence accomplishes many things including panoramic winter views of Tulsa's downtown skyline and the Arkansas River valley. The large master bedroom windows overlook a dry creek bed that, during heavy rains, fills to overflowing. The southern orientation of the rear of the house, along with its deep roof overhangs and thick tree canopy, provide ideal passive solar energy.

During the construction of the Swift house, Mark attended an auction of all the interior furnishings and materials in the old Mayes County Courthouse prior to its demolition. He successfully bid for one of the safe doors, but there was a requirement that all successful bidders remove their winnings the same day of the auction. Mark personally engaged a sledgehammer to demolish the surrounding wall while the auction was still in progress. Today, the safe door serves as the entrance to their "safe room."

What became of the Tumble Bus, the very thing that started their journey? An interested buyer approached Angela Swift about the business and, like any shrewd entrepreneur, Angela sold it even before they began designing their dream home. Their architect never knew about the Tumble Bus.



THE ARCHITECTURE OF BRIAN LLOYD FREESE



THE JIM AND CLAUDIA GLASS HOUSE 3021 SOUTH ROCKFORD ROAD BUILT 1997

Jim Glass began his real estate development career with a large corporate firm in Texas. For a few of those years, Jim and his wife, Claudia, lived in the Texas Hill Country. Therefore, when they returned to their hometown of Tulsa in the 1980s, they brought with them their love of the rustic Hill Country architecture. The simple forms, the eclectic blend of materials, and the spirit borne of the contributions of many cultures, all strongly appealed to them.

In 1995, Jim and Claudia purchased the property on Rockford Road overlooking Crow Creek as the site for their new home. After interviewing several architects, including a nationally celebrated Texas architect, Jim called Brian Freese. Once engaged, Freese began the design phase of the project and, after considerable time spent on the design, called a meeting to present an edifice reminiscent of more formal Mexican and south Texas buildings. Claudia was uncharacteristically quiet during the meeting. The Glasses needed time to absorb their architect's many unique ideas. Two weeks later, Jim met with Freese to comment on various plan adjustments and when he came to the point of delivering Claudia's comments, he summarized them

by saying she thought the exterior "looked like the Alamo." Therefore, Brian Freese went back to work. By the next meeting, the design of the house had become very informal, with a more open floor plan that accommodated comfortable, easy living and entertaining.

The street façade of the Glass home appears to be an ancient rustic structure of European influence with heavy stone-clad walls, a tile roof, and small balconies. The public entry is a 150-year-old Mexican gate that opens into the central courtyard. The house wraps around the courtyard and swimming pool, and it is from here that the floor plan and rear façade suggest an abandoned dwelling lovingly brought back to life with an eclectic assemblage of new forms and materials. The Glass family moved into their new home in 1997 and, after settling into their new surroundings, Jim often remarked that his family lived life to the fullest during their years in the house. Their parties were numerous and their family time spent together there was rich. Eventually they moved on, but the house they built on Rockford Road will always remain a little bit of Texas Hill Country bathed in Oklahoma sunlight.



opposite: The Jim and Claudia Glass House

top: The front of the Glass House

above: The entrance



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THE SANDRA BOURGEOIS HOUSE 2710 EAST 34TH STREET BUILT 2010

Anyone who meets Sandra Bourgeois would naturally think she is a native Tulsan. But in fact, she came west to attend the University of Tulsa. After graduation, she made Tulsa her home. Years later, Sandra secured a job as accountant and business manager in a large architecture firm and was soon elevated to the position of comptroller. She left to become a partner and chief financial officer of a very successful spin-off architecture firm.

Sandra met Brian Freese in the early 1980s at the architecture firm where she was comptroller. They developed a strong friendship and mutual respect for each other. In 2007, Sandra found an enticing piece of land situated near a quiet lake in a neighborhood, Tulsa's Ranch Acres, and asked Brian Freese to be her architect.

The finished design captures the spirit of Ranch Style vernacular, yet is clearly a modernized version. Horizontal masses of crab orchard stone, low-pitched, standing seam metal roofs with deep overhangs, abundant glass at the rear of the house, and a series of wood trellises and beams seem to anchor the Bourgeois house to the terrain. The front entry is intentionally hidden from the street but a small waterfall cut into the stone façade hints of more to see.

Once through the hidden entry courtyard, the home opens up with huge glass walls capturing views outward, and melding the indoors with the outdoors. Light-filled, voluminous interior spaces flow together, creating an open, airy feel.

opposite above: Glass walls lead to the patio

opposite below: The living and dining areas

above: The Sandra Bourgeois House



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THE DALE GILMAN AND FRANCIE FAUDREE HOUSE 3456 SOUTH ATLANTA PLACE BUILT 2004

Dale and Francie have traveled the world over and have seen lots of great architecture. With so much of their lives spent in Europe, it is inevitable that its culture, art, and architecture would soak into their souls. They were familiar with Brian Freese's architectural creations and felt certain he could design the home they had so long imagined.

The focal point of the otherwise austere exterior is an eighteenth-century European carved limestone door surround that Dale had saved for ten years. The building forms allowed for a formal classical entry court and garden, and private courtyards on one side and at the rear of the house.

A sense of privacy and intimacy is evident both inside and out of the Gillman-Faudree house. The interior appears both classical and modern, composed of a series of large spaces defined by generous openings. The color palettes are very restrained: light walls and ceilings, no moldings, and a simple painted wood baseboard.

opposite: The Dale Gilman and Francie Faudree House

left: The entry hall