



The Best Little Boathouse in Texas

“It’s kind of a pilgrimage getting from the house to the lake,” explains architect Arthur Andersson, who, with partner Chris Wise, designed first the boathouse and then the residence for the Martin family in the hills west of Austin, Texas. A 200-foot wood-and-steel-cable suspension bridge begins a few hundred yards from the Martin home, swoops up over a hill and a creek, then meets a stone staircase that leads down to the shores of Lake Austin.

Designed as a prefabricated monolithic steel grid, the boathouse’s orthogonal frame was delivered from Houston by truck and then transported by barge to the site. The frame was then welded onto pylon supports sunk into submerged rocks. The ipe wood walls, floors, ceiling, and window frames were added onsite. “We wanted to make a delicate mark on the landscape, without blending into it outright,” says Andersson. To this end, the steel is painted with a protective liquid

zinc, whose subtle pewter color is at peace with the water and sky. The first floor provides covered slips for the family’s boat, rowing scull, and Jet Ski.

But the structure does more than offer succor to the pleasure craft. Just 400 square feet on each level and furnished with comfy chairs, it’s both a playhouse and a retreat—and it’s off the grid. As Andersson explains, even in the baking Texas climate, “we’re intrigued by designing buildings with minimal air-conditioning. We took advantage of the convection current off the lake, and the house opens up every which way to let in the breezes. If you’re still hot—jump out!” The north, east, and west sides of the structure have convertible awning screens that open to facilitate quick escapes, and the enclosed south wall contains a storage cabinet and one small aperture that frames a Swedish hanging kerosene lantern—a housewarming gift from the architects that glows like a beacon in the night. ■