



# DEFINING ZEN

BY TIFFANY HORTON, HORTON DESIGN STUDIOS

PHOTOS BY MATT CORNELIUS

In the Arkansas countryside, nestled amidst serene surroundings, lies the tranquil retreat of Dustin Hughes and Lily McBryde. The expansive pasture is home to grazing cattle and the family's three adorable dogs. Bordering the pastureland stands a tree line that adds to the overall tranquility. "Dustin and I are both high-strung, always going 1000 miles per hour," explained Lily, "so I really wanted the house to be zen, somewhere earthy and calming."

The heavily stoned exterior and clean, simple lines give the house a slight Frank Lloyd Wright aesthetic, while the black accents offer a blend of contemporary and timeless appeal. To further integrate with the surroundings and invite nature into the design, rain chains were installed in place of traditional downspouts. Ample landscaping adds the perfect finishing touch.



Walking through the home's large metal and glass front doors, you enter an open living area with soft, neutral walls and a stunning wood-burning fireplace. A large bird of paradise graces one corner, while lush green plants adorn various spots throughout the room. Lily's mother, a master gardener, has clearly passed on her green thumb. This thoughtful use of plants, along with a mix of fabrics, textures, and personal touches, enhances the home's earthy palette. At the center of the living room sits a live-edge coffee table that Dustin and Lily had made from a tree at their old house. "Unfortunately, the tree was starting to die, and it was going to fall," explained Dustin, "so we cut it down and took it to Oak Meadow, a local sawmill, and were able to make it into the tables we wanted." Lily further describes, "I had a shape in mind

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and was a little bit nervous about what it was going to be like. But, when I saw it, I just thought, "This is beautiful."

Another really special piece in the house is the dining table. The large travertine table once belonged to Lily's aunt. "I loved it always, and when I graduated from grad school, she gifted it to me. So, after we built the house, Dustin and I had it freighted here from Washington, D.C.," said Lily.

For added personal touch, Dustin built all the cabinetry. His dad was a cabinetmaker and Dustin grew up helping him, so it only seemed natural that he would want to complete this part of the house on his own. Building the cabinets himself, he ensured meticulous attention to detail in every aspect. For example, in the mudroom, he tailored the depth of the shoe drawers based on the measurements of his tallest

pair of boots so that he never had to worry about coming off the ranch and through the house in muddy shoes.

As the owners of Stone Studio, Dustin and Lily incorporated a variety of stones in the countertops throughout the house. In the kitchen, they used an elegant quartzite with varying shades of tan, taupe, and gray on the countertops and continued it up for the backsplash. The large island features



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the use of a laminated edge for extra visual interest. Transitioning to the powder bath, they opted for a black stone with pronounced movement and bold contrast, complemented by an integrated sink for a dramatic touch. Across the hall, in daughter Ella's suite, Lily used her very favorite stone, Bianco Rhino marble, with a leathered finish, which harmonizes perfectly with the dainty floral mosaic floor tile and hints of soft pink. Other feminine details in Ella's room are sconces and towel hooks, with a simplistic floral design and a fun mannequin that she uses to display accessories and sometimes clothes.

In the backyard, the family created multiple opportunities to enjoy their new space and to make lasting memories. The oversized porch boasts an outdoor kitchen, which three generations—Dustin, his dad, and Ella—framed out completely on their own. There is also a large stone fireplace, a mosquito spraying system, and built-in heaters that make this space enjoyable year-round. Beyond the porch sits a pool and hot tub skirted by more perfectly planned landscaping and accented with black umbrellas to provide swimmers ample shade.

Inside and out, the Hughes' home is full of personal touches and radiates the warmth of family. From the tranquil setting to Lily's array of live indoor plants, it's clear that their goal of finding a place of peace has been achieved, promising to be a calming sanctuary for years to come. 📍



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