



# Glendower Court

By Joel Warren Barna

*Curtis & Windham Arquitectos diseñó una residencia privada en Glendower Court, al oeste del centro de Houston. Esta casa es una composición asimétrica de ladrillo y cristal. De dos niveles, sus plantas se organizan rectangularmente a lo largo del lote, adyacentes a un patio lateral. Su construcción precisa y elegantes uniones estructurales son elementos modernos que hacen esta casa lujosa.*

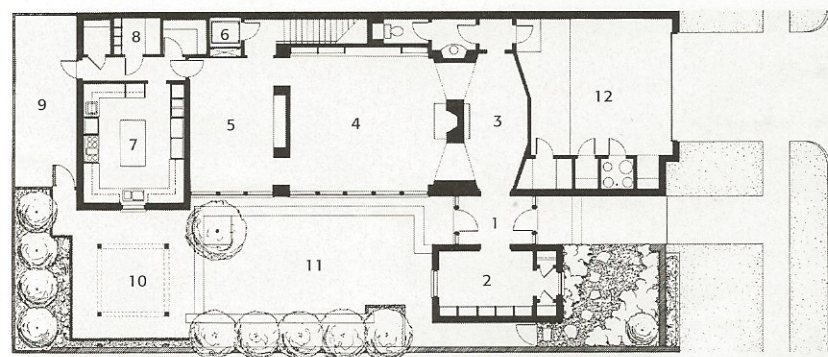
1 Curtis & Windham Architects created a sheltered courtyard by pulling the house to the northern edge of its lot.

2 Tall windows focus the ground-floor living spaces on the adjacent courtyard; here, the living room opens onto the dining room.

THE HOUSE CALLED A Private Residence in Glendower Court, designed by Curtis & Windham Architects of Houston, is a rectangular composition in wood-formed brick and glass, a variation on the canonical Miesian modernism of the Houston house, which draws on sources such as Philip Johnson's Menlo Park House (1950) and his campus design for St. Thomas University (1957). In this tradition, the house exudes a classical decorum, even though the architects, at the express wish of the client, used none of the usual classicizing devices—columns, pediments, cornices, symmetrical arrangements, or golden-section proportions.

The house's quiet angularity bespeaks a strong concern for privacy, but at the same time it says a lot about the ongoing transformation of Glendower Court, a small neighborhood just east of the River Oaks area in Houston. First established in the 1920s as a bedroom suburb for the city's burgeoning new class of office workers with cars, Glendower Court was a neighborhood of red-brick two-story Georgian-style houses with detached





#### GROUND FLOOR PLAN

- 1 ENTRY
- 2 LIBRARY
- 3 GALLERY
- 4 LIVING ROOM
- 5 DINING ROOM
- 6 ELEVATOR
- 7 KITCHEN
- 8 WINE ROOM
- 9 SERVICE YARD
- 10 PERGOLA
- 11 GARDEN
- 12 GARAGE



3 The Private Residence in Glendower Court presents its garage door to the street, inverting the sequence of the older neighborhood.

#### RESOURCES

**Reinforced concrete:** Custom Foundations; **modular brick:** St. Joe/Wester Brick; **limestone:** South Texas Stone; **glazing system:** Haley Greer; **gypsum:** USG/Marek Brothers; **windows and entrance doors:** Gibson Millwork; **interior doors:** Lone Star; **overhead doors:** Overhead Door Company;

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backyard garages. Until recent years, the streets of the tiny neighborhood, with their uniform house setbacks and their sidewalks, lawns, flowerbeds, and front porches, had a strong local character of urban civility that derived from the area's original deed restrictions.

Those restrictions, however, expired decades ago. Almost all of the neighborhood's original character has been swept away in the past few years. The old houses of Glendower Court, along with the smaller bungalows of the adjacent Melanie Court neighborhood, are being torn down and replaced by much larger structures for an upscale market. In unzoned Houston, only the city's setback ordinance governs the positioning of houses, and the minimum setback of 22 feet from the curb is the new standard. These days, in Glendower Court and Melanie Court (and in other rapidly changing inner-city neighborhoods west of downtown Houston), the strongest street-facing element is the garage door.

The house by Curtis & Windham follows this new pattern: It is a two-story volume, poised

over and stretching back from a ground level garage. By pushing the house to the lot's northern buildable edge, the architects preserved a long courtyard for the house to look into. The courtyard can be glimpsed from the entry, which is tucked between the main house volume and a one-story library pavilion, sheltered from the street by a small walled garden. The entry opens onto a small antechamber, separated from the living room by a freestanding brick fireplace. The ground floor's major spaces are kept open and focused on the courtyard outdoors by rigorously zoning the closets, toilets, stairs, and other services into a narrow, all-but-invisible, strip along the northern wall. Upstairs, the plan is only slightly less disciplined, as the stair hall opens into a sitting room, and bathrooms and closets are attached to the three bedrooms they serve.

The house's sense of classical decorum builds on a luxuriously modern restraint, shown in the detailing of junctions between brick walls and hardwood floors, and in the precise construction throughout.

TA

**PROJECT** Private Residence in Glendower Court, Houston  
**ARCHITECT** Curtis & Windham Architects, Houston (William Curtis and Russell Windham, principals-in-charge)  
**CONTRACTOR** Thomsen Company, Inc., Houston  
**CONSULTANTS** Cunningham Engineering (structural engineering); McDugald Steele (landscape); Michael John Smith (lighting); Ofner Design Association (interior furnishings)  
**PHOTOGRAPHER** Paul Hester and Lisa Carol Hardaway