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The Perfect Hidden Gem of a House Gets Spectacularly Renovated by a Fashion King and an Interior Design Wiz

A Friendship with Masterful Benefits

BY REBECCA SHERMAN // 10.13.17

PHOTOGRAPHY LISA PETROLE



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rian Bolke has had quite the eventful two years. He's the co-founder of fashion, home, and design empire **Forty Five Ten** and, with partner **Headington Companies**, debuted the stunning new four-story boutique in downtown Dallas to international applause. On its heels, the original building on McKinney Avenue was revamped as an interiors boutique called **For Home Forty Five Ten**. Next came a Forty Five Ten outpost in Houston's tony **River Oaks District**, and most recently, a store in Napa, California. In the midst of all the marvelous madness, Bolke and his husband, Faisal Halum, purchased and renovated a spectacular **Lionel Morrison**-designed home.

Adding another major design project to the mix hadn't been on their agenda. The house, a pristine white box designed by Morrison in 1987, was too perfect to pass up, and the couple snagged it before it ever hit the market. Halum, a top broker with **Briggs Freeman Sotheby's International Realty**, was initially looking at the house for a client. Located between two sought-after neighborhoods, **Highland Park** and **Knox Henderson**, the secluded house in **Northern Heights** backs up to the **Katy Trail** with its own private gate.

“It was a hidden gem, and we had to move fast on it,” Halum says. “It wasn’t something we thought through — but that’s how real estate is. When you find the right one, you just move.”

The house had remained in the hands of a single homeowner for almost 30 years, and it was kept in pristine condition.

“We thought, ‘We will just refinish a few things, and maybe paint a few things,’” says Bolke. “But it snowballed into this much more massive project.”

That’s where **Gonzalo Bueno** of interiors and architecture firm **Ten Plus Three** came in.

“Gonzalo and I have been best friends for 10 years, so there was never any question who we would use,” Bolke says. “I’ve never met anybody who has a better temperament. He’s never in a bad mood, and that’s somebody you want to be around.”

The two have a lot in common, says Bueno.

“Brian has a degree in environmental design, and he’s very easy to talk design and architecture with,” Bueno notes. “Also, we both like well-designed things, and that connects us.”

The friends travel constantly together with their spouses — Bueno is married to Michael McCray, a manager at a TV rep firm.

“Brian and I are always trying to find inspiration for our work,” says Bueno, who just got back from a trip to Africa, where the two couples stayed at Dallas designer **Tricia Wilson’s** lodge — a trip they purchased at auction during the **Dallas Museum of Art’s Art Ball** last year. “It’s when you really get to know your friends, when you travel together,” Bueno says. “There are some friends you wouldn’t want to do that with, but Brian and Faisal are not high maintenance.”

If their travels were the litmus test for how well a major home renovation might go, everyone passed with flying colors. Not only were they copacetic, but they challenged each other along the way.

“I think Gonzalo would agree: He totally pushed us out of our comfort zone, and I like to think we pushed him out of his,” Bolke says. “I don’t think this looks like any other project he’s ever done.”



The dramatic entrance to the Lionel Morrison-designed home.

Lionel Morrison, a reductionist whose austere white boxes are known for their celebration of light and space, designed some of the first modern residences along the **Katy Trail** in the 1980s. Decades later, the one now owned by Bolke and Halum is one of many that stood the test of time and remain in the area.

“We knew the potential of such a clean space,” Bueno says. “It was easy to see what could be done with it.”

A few original elements needed updating, such as the 1980s white tubular staircase, which Bueno redesigned in sleek metal and glass. A new pivoting blackened steel front door introduces a bit of industrial vibe — a longtime favorite design style at **Forty Five Ten**. A blackened steel-clad wall was added in the foyer so that the house would unfold slowly as you enter, and the original white-brick exterior was repainted dark gray, and the massive storefront windows were repainted black.

“It was such a big decision to go from light to dark,” Bolke says. “But I love how it changes the feeling of the house.”

With windows on all four sides, natural light floods the interiors throughout the day, adding to the mood and drama.

“It’s one of the things I loved about the house when we first walked in,” Bolke says. “I care deeply about natural light. It’s one of those subliminal things that probably make the house as comfortable as it is.”

Bolke got the new minimalist kitchen he always wanted, and with views to the Zen-like courtyard, the space — designed in collaboration with **Olavo Faria and Ornare** — has become a preferred spot for working on his laptop in the mornings. The bronze mirror backsplash and open floating shelves make the kitchen an ideal bar during parties.

“It’s not a kitchen that would work for anyone else,” Bolke says. “But we don’t really cook at all, so it works out perfect for us.”

Upstairs, Bolke and Halum each have roomy Poliform closets — but most people are surprised to see that given Bolke’s background in fashion, Halum’s closet is actually the larger of the two.

“It’s easily twice the size of mine,” Bolke says with a smile. “He has to wear suits every day to work, and I’m pretty lucky. I wear a lot of cardigans and T-shirts and jeans that don’t take up much room. Plus, I’m always editing down.”

The original master bath was gutted and redesigned. As with everything, they went with their personal preferences rather than trying to design something for future resale.

“We played with putting in a tub in a thousand different ways,” Bolke says. “But in the end, we decided just to go with this massive shower, which I love.”

The bath's striking Porto black marble was one of the first things purchased for the house, long before they even knew what to do with it. Bolke loved the black marble so much that he insisted on cladding the entire room in it, a decision that Bueno ultimately overruled. Instead, the black marble was used more sparingly, and **Bianco Alanur** marble was installed on the floors and shower walls.

“Now that I see the finished space, I know he was right,” Bolke says. “Gonzalo was a voice of reason about so many things and kept us from making a lot of mistakes.”

When your interior designer doubles as your best friend, the term collaboration takes on a new level of meaning. The potential for challenge is great when everyone involved has different tastes.

“Gonzalo loves really beautiful things, and Faisal loves very simple, pure, and honest things. I tend to like weird things,” Bolke says. “Figuring out how something can be beautiful, honest, pure, quirky, and weird at the same time is a balancing act.”

Surprising Touches

A perfect example of successfully blending their disparate styles is the foyer's limited edition, solid bronze **Holly Hunt** chair. One of the first purchases made for the house, it appears to be nothing more than a

typical metal folding chair. Upon closer inspection, you'll find it weighs a ton and is beautifully made, like a piece of sculpture.

"All three of us fell in love with it," Bolke says. "Gonzolo loves it because it's a really beautiful object. Faisal loves it because it's so heavy — and he thinks of it as being so strong. I love it because nobody understands what it is until they touch it."

The chair is part of a striking vignette beneath the stairs that includes a sculptural bench by **Marc Newson**, which once resided in design rebel **Peter Marino's** New York offices. A **Richard Avedon** photograph of aristocrat and fashion designer **Jacqueline de Ribes** sits on a restored French brass easel from the mid-20th century. The photograph tugs at Bolke's heart.

"My first job was at Gump's in San Francisco, and they carried her clothes," he says. "I always thought she was the most glamorous creature that ever existed. This photo really spoke to me."

These carefully selected and personal objects in the foyer set the tone for the rest of the house — collections of important mid-20th century furnishings and contemporary art. Each piece seems to come with a story, and Bolke relishes the retelling. A pair of rare '60s-era **Vladimir Kagan** sofas, discovered on 1stdibs, had just been re-covered in

Perennials fabric and installed in their home when Kagan himself arrived at Sutherland showroom in May 2015 to sign copies of his book.

On a whim, Bolke and Halum invited him to their house for drinks and to see the sofas. Their newfound friendship was made all the more poignant when 88-year-old Kagan died just months later. The sofas are in many ways a reminder of what friendships can be: Bueno had them specially padded so that Bolke and Halum could be comfortable watching TV in the living room, and the plush indoor-outdoor fabric was chosen so that Gator, the couple's 11-year-old English bulldog, could lounge with them.

“Gonzalo knew the sofas were not just something to look at, but meant for every-day use,” Bolke says. “It’s that kind of thoughtful level that is really quite special when you are working with someone who knows you so well.”

A striking vintage **Paul Evans Cityscape** dining table “was a happy accident,” says Bolke, who fell in love with it on **1stdibs**. Set under art-light spots in the living area, the table’s reflective, multi-plane surfaces cast an unexpected light show on the ceiling, and it is sometimes mistaken by visitors for an art installation. A **Karl Springer** lizard-embossed backgammon table from the 1960s — an early purchase — bears the well-worn patina of use.

“You wonder where it once lived, and how many games were played on it,” Bolke muses.

Everything’s Not Black and White

While almost everything in the house was chosen with unanimous consensus, Bolke and Halum each allowed themselves one piece to call their own. For Bolke, it was a set of high-backed vintage Frank Gehry chairs, which he unearthed during one of many late-night prowls on 1stdibs. Bueno worried that the chairs were too stiff and uncomfortable to use as seating in a dining room.

“I’ve always loved those chairs,” Bolke says. “Maybe they didn’t make the most sense in here, but I didn’t care.”

When the chairs arrived, they were actually purple — not the black Bolke assumed.

“It was super humbling, because I thought, ‘Oh, I don’t need any help picking furniture,’ which was completely not the case,” Bolke says. Bueno salvaged the situation by lacquering the chairs black and moving the dining table into the center of the room, so the chairs would become more of a sculptural statement. On another humbling note, a set of more comfortable chairs are kept in the garage for dinner parties. Bolke doesn’t have any regrets.

“Those **Gehry** chairs still make me happy every day.”

For Halum, the one piece he couldn't live without was a large black-and-white photograph by Iranian artist **Shirin Neshat** that he first saw at the **TWO x TWO for AIDS and Art auction**.

“We couldn't afford it at the time, and it was one of those things we'd talk about for years, when we might add one to the collection,” Halum says.

The photograph, which depicts a woman whose body is inscribed with calligraphic Farsi text, is from a series the artist created based on female warriors during the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979. Bolke considered buying a smaller version of the photograph for Halum's 50th birthday. Again, friends came into play: **Cindy and Howard Rachofsky**, who have known the couple for years, tracked down the original photograph at a show in Dubai, where it had come up for sale again.

“I really wanted that to be his present because it was something he was very emotional about,” Bolke says.

The photograph now hangs in a prominent spot near the front door.

“I love it,” says Halum.



The bathroom's Porto black marble was one of the first purchases for the house.

Much of the furniture was chosen specifically for their new house because the massive scale of the rooms dictated larger furniture and art. But both Bolke and Halum brought a few touchstones from their past, including a pair of chairs Bolke had purchased from a vintage store in **Fair Park**, when he first moved to Dallas 23 years ago. Bueno had them

recovered in brown **Holly Hunt** upholstery. A pair of vintage **Murano** glass mid-20th-century lamps that belonged to Halum found a place in the living room.

“I think Gonzalo did an amazing job of allowing what felt organic and natural to us, to come through,” Bolke says. “Many times houses can end up looking like **Design District** showrooms, but this is a personal house. We wanted it to feel like everything in it has been collected throughout our lives.”

One of the best decisions they made was to hire a consultant to help them purchase art, says Bolke. Although they’d been buying photography for years, **Anne Bruder** with **Worth Art Advisory** in New York, the daughter of noted Dallas art advisor **Rebecca Bruder**, added much to the mix.

“She helped us round out our collection with some things we never would have found otherwise,” Bolke says.

He and Halum returned from the **2017 Dallas Art Fair** with a pair of interactive wall sculptures by **Elaine Cameron-Weir**. Made from neon light, laboratory hardware, sterling silver, mica, and frankincense, they are meant to be lit so the scent becomes part of the experience. Bolke is attracted to the contraption’s quizzical nature.

“I like art and objects that make you think,” he says.

A large-scale photograph by **Noémie Goudal** in the dining room does just that: It depicts an empty parking structure where the artist has built a stage set, giving the appearance of a modern-day ruin.

“You think you know what it is until you look at it closely, then you’re like, ‘Oh my, how did she do that?’”

One of their most recent purchases is a 1977 photograph of **Elizabeth Taylor** by **Herb Ritts**, taken after Taylor had brain surgery to remove a tumor. The glamorous Hollywood star’s head is shaved, and you can see the scar. It hangs in the kitchen, where Bolke contemplates it every morning.

“There’s something poignant about the fact that **Elizabeth Taylor**, who had to live with the burden of being the most beautiful woman in the world, let herself be photographed with her brain tumor scar and a shaved head,” he says.

It makes him deeply consider the meaning of beauty, and reminds him of the fragility of life.

“That’s the power of having art that’s personal to you,” he says. “It should speak to you every day and have some kind of an interesting story to it.”

The couple’s growing art collection was one of the driving forces behind their decision to buy the **Lionel Morrison**-designed house. Says

Bueno, “We wanted a house that had peaceful architecture and white walls for the art.”

He intentionally kept the color palette neutral and earthy, dominated by bronze, black, gray, and brown.

“I never showed them anything with color.”

Not only are the subdued hues a good backdrop for strong art, they also wear better with an active dog romping through the house. Bueno designed custom wool mohair rugs with Gator in mind, says Bolke.

“He’s the messiest dog that ever lived. I think of mohair as being so fragile, but it’s indestructible, just like the Perennials fabrics he used for the upholstery. It made what could have been a very precious house into something practical.”

The interiors have become richer and evolved, and the same might be said for him and Bueno.

“A big project like this could have ended our relationship, but it just made it so much better,” Bolke says.



Brian Bolke, Faisal Halum, Gonzalo Bueno



The bathroom's Porto black marble was one of the first purchases for the house.



The home was designed with the couple's dog, Gator, in mind.



The home has a peaceful, neutral color palette.



The couple wanted a house with white walls to display their growing art collection.



The home holds a smart mix of simple and extraordinary pieces.



The couple hired an art consultant to assist in the renovation.



The earthy color palette makes for a serene atmosphere.



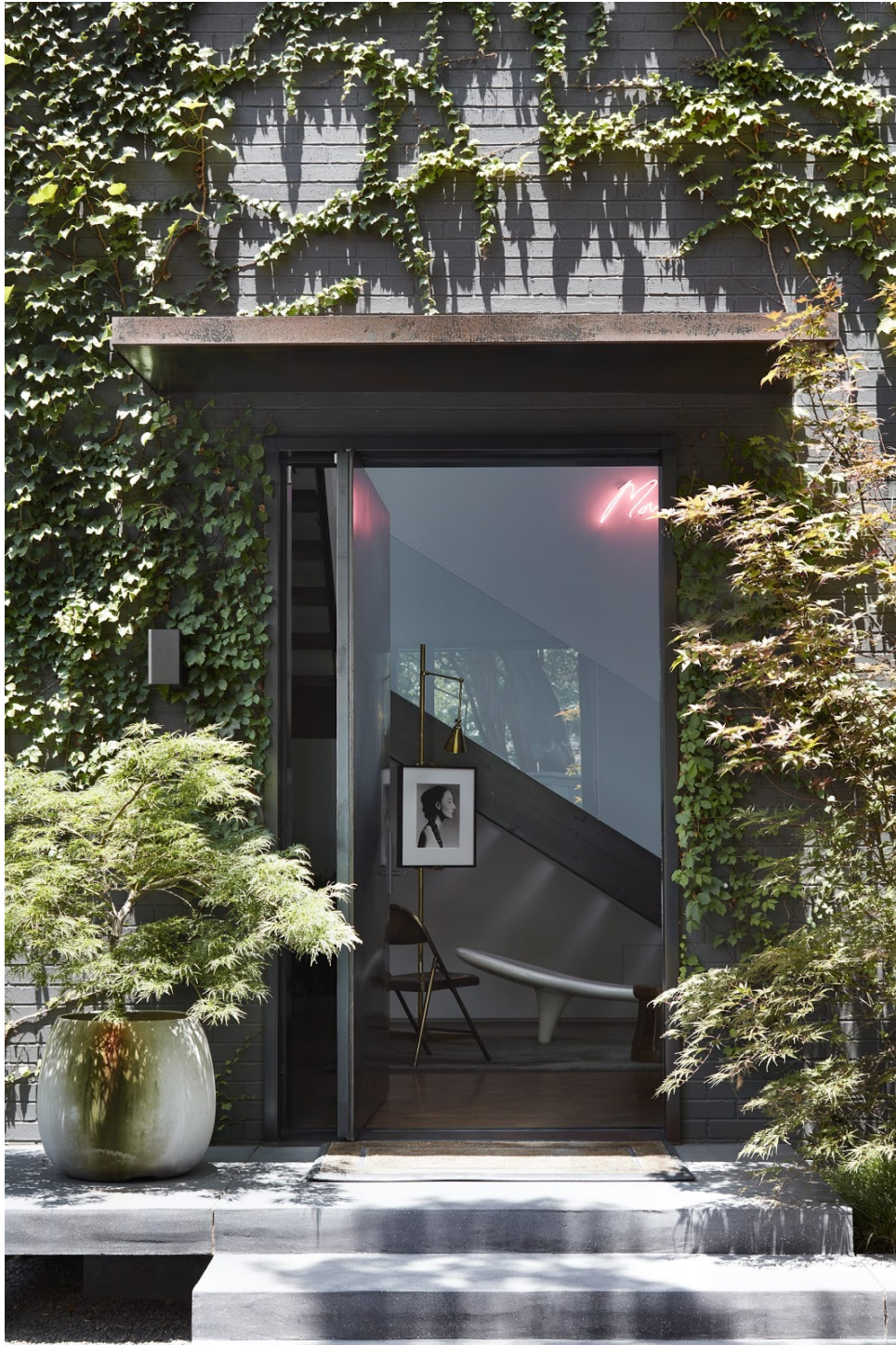
The kitchen is more focused on form than function – perfect for the non-culinary couple.



The minimalist decor is the perfect canvas for the couple's art collection.



The dramatic entrance to the Lionel Morrison-designed home.



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