

# Welch taps Texas’ past

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The 8,750-square-foot painted-brick house with a standing-seam metal roof is large, yet it feels intimate inside its rooms. As you walk into the downstairs living area, you don’t even realize that it’s one big room. Two square pods paneled in honey-colored wood are placed in the center of the space, creating cozy areas for a bar and library. This arrangement allows the room to be enclosed in walls of windows.

The eye is drawn to the serpentine staircase enclosed by two stories of windows and topped by Welch’s signature stick ceiling.

**Still the visionary**

Though he walks with a knotty wood cane and has

visual impairment in one eye, Welch is still the visionary at his firm, where he employs three full-time associate architects. Feisty and firm yet playful, Welch knows what he wants, from how a house sits on a site to the design of light sconces in the living room.

“He can be stubborn, but he truly listens,” Baldwin says. “He understands how people live, and I think his houses are very livable.”

Baldwin and Scott Marek, who led the design on the Greenway Parks commission, love working in the studio environment, where they can play music and listen to Frank talk about architecture.

“Working with Frank, we somehow emulate what he does,” Baldwin says. “We all meet with the clients, and Frank does a concept sketch or gestural sketches. And we

young’uns try to bring some of the new ideas in. But I’m always surprised by how Frank just knows.”

That intuition leads many of Welch’s clients to let him take the lead.

“We have to be responsive to the tastes of the clients,” says Welch. “But sometimes they leave it up to us. We want the buildings we do to be successful as art without using the word art.”

Many of Welch’s artistic inspirations come from his past, Marek says. As a child, Welch visited a photographer’s studio that had a skylight, and that skylight made an impression on Welch about light and directionality.

“I think it’s those snippets from his memory that inform a lot of his ideas,” Marek says.

### Historic references

Welch also has been influenced by the work of other architects, including Italy’s Palladio of the 1500s. He dubbed a new design in Dallas’ Preston Hollow neighborhood Texas Palladian. The modern yet classical home employs Palladio’s appreciation of symmetry and simplicity applied to modern principles and native materials.

“I love looking at architecture by other architects,” Welch says. “I’m always looking. Looking is very important for



Nan Coulter/Special Contributor

**Welch calls the design** of this Preston Hollow home, still under construction, Texas Palladian. The structure emphasizes symmetry in design and natural materials.

an architect. Because you’re actually learning.”

The 7,000-square-foot limestone residence looks like a modern Italian villa nestled into its wooded creek lot. The square floor plan is divided into nine parts. A room and a chimney anchor each exterior corner, upstairs and downstairs.

At the center of the house is a grand, multilevel space that Welch calls the garden room, a typical feature of Palladian design.

The symmetry and sturdy masonry give the exterior the impression of a temple. Accents of pipe wood in Welch’s signature stick pattern soften the look, and zinc paneling will weather to softness over time.

It was also important to Welch for the house to blend into its parklike setting.

Welch and Baldwin designed the garage to almost disappear into the landscape. The garage sits below grade, and a thick planting of native

prairie grasses will disguise the roof, in time.

Baldwin says there’s a restrained, timeless nature to Welch’s body of work.

“Whereas others might be doing more flashy work, to Frank it’s not necessary,” he says.

“It’s the same honest use of materials and a design that’s clearly Texan. They seem like they’ve always been there, but still seem current. Anyone can read them.”



Lara Solt/Staff Photographer

**Architect** Frank Welch, 84, opened his first office in 1959.



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## MARKET WEEK

# After 30 years, designer’s whimsical style resurrected

Local furniture seller unveils John Dickinson pieces

By ERIN BOOKE  
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Owning a whimsical piece designed by John Dickinson is no longer just a fantasy for design lovers. The Dallas-based Sutherland showroom is bringing the late design star’s imaginative furnishings back to life with the new John Dickinson Collection.

“I’ve just been a fan of John’s and, you know, every 20 years it seems something old is new again,” says David Sutherland, who began representing the acclaimed interior designer’s work in 1980. “A lot of people are going to say, ‘Oh, wow, I remember that.’”

The collection features estate-authorized productions of the San Francisco-based designer’s classic playful pieces, from hooved and footed tables with animal-shape legs to lamps that resemble tree stumps and other natural forms.

Dickinson, who died in 1982, also was known for playing with scale and using nontraditional materials such as plaster and galvanized tin, which he draped and pleated to look like faux fabrics.

The new productions, cast from the creator’s original molds, forgo the plaster for glass-fiber reinforced con-

crete to render them lighter and sustainable enough for outdoor use.

Sutherland says that after he began representing Dickinson’s home furnishings in his Texas showrooms, he realized that shipping the plaster pieces would be difficult.

“We began working on a synthetic material, but in the middle of that project, John passed away,” Sutherland says.

The molds were shelved for about 30 years until now, when Sutherland decided it was time for a reintroduction.

While Dickinson’s original work appealed to a small audience, Sutherland thinks more people will appreciate him today.

“The pieces not only are functional but also substantial in their presence,” he says. “I’ve seen every one of these pieces in different environments, and they all work.”

The tables and pedestals are the highlight of the collection.

The African tables and pieces with feet resembling paws, human feet and cloven hooves are classic Dickinson pieces featuring a smooth, elegant white surface that reproduces the look and touch of the originals’ cast plaster. Sutherland says the collection also will include pieces never seen by the public before, such as an oversize six-footed table and a twig floor lamp.



Photos by Sutherland

**John Dickinson’s designs** applied nature-inspired motifs to everyday objects, giving a side table hooves instead of traditional table legs, for example.

“The designs so totally identified with John, they didn’t even need to be patented,” says Sutherland. “And you can’t say that about a lot of furniture designers.”

“John was an icon,” he adds. “He just didn’t live long enough to be noticed by everybody.”

**Details**

The John Dickinson Collection debuts this week at the Dallas-based Sutherland showroom during the Winter Homefurnishings Market in the Dallas Design District. It is available to the trade starting at \$2,000. To view the collection, go to [sutherlandfurniture.com](http://sutherlandfurniture.com).



**A twig lamp** in the collection is made of resin with a galvanized shade.



**Many of the items** in the Dickinson collection feature a matte finish.



**A large, six-legged** African table is among the pieces not previously offered.



**Dickinson** was known for nontraditional materials made to resemble fabrics.