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Home on Park Island mixes modern furniture and eclectic artwork with life on Bayou St. John

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Twilight in the backyard, with a pool that sits above the bayou.
Jeff Strout

Years ago, while attending Jazz Fest, Dana Mckee grabbed up five colorful tiles made by Hasslock Studio in Covington that depict various aspects of New Orleans culture. She carried those tiles with her for 17 years as she and her husband, Tom Stoner, moved into and out of a series of four houses in two states.

Last month, the tiles finally found a permanent home where they provide whimsy and color, set within the otherwise white tiles beneath a window in the couple's newly renovated kitchen in the Park Island home they purchased in 2020.

"I just kept carrying them around, waiting for the right place for them," said Mckee, a former corporate executive working in neuroscience research and video ethnography.



The sleek kitchen features restored pink terrazzo floors and new pale gray cabinets against white counters and walls.
Jeff Strout

The kitchen renovation saw the removal of marble tiles that covered the original rose-hued terrazzo floors and the replacement of worn plywood cabinets with sleek new ones in a pale dove gray. The cabinets offset the Iceland White porcelain tile from Brazil and white quartz counters, making the Hasslock tiles, a stainless apron sink and a gleaming Wolf Range the focal points of the sleek room.

The makeover was planned by Stoner, a 3D designer and former cabinet maker, and executed by Jason Verdin, of [Marchand Creative Kitchens](#).

“We wanted light and space. The kitchen was dreary. Now it flows into the rest of the house,” Mckee said of the home she describes as “Transitional. Somewhere between midcentury modern and contemporary.”

The house was built in the early 1950s by Clem Dreiswerd, a left-handed World Series-winning pitcher for the Boston Red Sox cum builder. It was a private home for Jacques Fortier, one of the original developers of Park Island, which sits in Bayou St. John and is accessed via a narrow concrete bridge from St. Bernard Avenue.



Park Island- The main living area is a perfect example of mid mod style with furnishings to match. ORG XMIT: NO.parkisland.io.072923
Jeff Strout

The connection of Bayou St. John with Lake Pontchartrain was key to the French choosing the site for settlement. An Indian portage, comprised of what is now Bayou Road and Grand Route St. John, connected the bayou to the Mississippi River. However, a sharp curve known as Devil's Elbow was often clogged and rendered impassable by sand and branches, making navigation a nuisance.

The eventual solution, after the Civil War, was the excavation and straightening of the channel. The surplus sediment formed an island 28 feet above sea level. The new land mass was originally named D'Hemecourt Island for the land surveyor who oversaw its creation.

Ownership of the island changed hands several times until 1916, when the land was lost in a lawsuit and became city property. The city used the valuable island as a dump.



The dining area is a classically styled midcentury modern setting: The circular table was designed in 1966 by Warren Platner. Above it is a 'Saucer Bubble' pendant designed by George Nelson in 1952. Recessed built-in bookshelves display collectibles from the Krewe of Zulu, of which Tom Stoner is a member.
Jeff Strout

In 1953, Fortier, Joseph Schiro and L.S. Hiern formed a corporation to purchase the land. They renamed it Park Island and developed it with 24 waterfront lots and four interior lots.

The Mckee-Stoner home is on one of the waterfront lots. It affords expansive views of the bayou and technicolor sunsets through sliding plate-glass doors leading from the living room to a covered outdoor patio, cooled by a pair of Ball fans by Ron Rezek.

A graceful swimming pool terminates just before steps that lead down to the bayou itself.

The soothing view of the tranquil bayou is framed in tropical foliage including bamboo, ginger, alocaisia, pampas grass, vetiver, sago palm, yucca and mahonia.

At the center of the home is an open atrium, typical for the time it was built. The enclosed but roofless space bathes the interior with light. Another smaller version is located within the master suite, which has its own view of the bayou.



Modern furniture and lighting meet folk art in the dining room bar area.
Jeff Strout

The home is furnished in a who's who of noteworthy 20th-century designers.

In the dining room, the circular table was designed in 1966 by Warren Platner. Above it is a "Saucer Bubble" pendant designed by George Nelson in 1952. Recessed built-in bookshelves display collectibles from the Krewe of Zulu, of which Stoner is a member.

In the living room, the furnishings have chrome-plated steel frames. A sinuous black leather LC4 chaise is in the style of Le Corbusier, 1929. It's accompanied by a black leather 1929 Barcelona chair and hassock by Mies van der Rohe, and a 1927 E1027 adjustable side table by Eileen Grey.



The back of the house includes a covered patio.
Jeff Strout

On the other side of the room, a pair of ivory leather LC3 Grand Confort chairs in the style of Le Corbusier add contrast. The room is illuminated by a Sputnik-style light fixture.

A pair of Artemide Tolomeo floor lamps stand to either side of a trio of interlocking sculptural bookcases

“We have carried the modern furniture with us through several homes,” Mckee said. “Modern furniture goes with any style. This is the ‘newest’ house we have ever lived in, but modern furniture is the only thing that could work here.”



The master suite has a view of the bayou.
Jeff Strout

To say the couple’s art collection is eclectic would be an understatement. The collection includes original works by local artist Dr. Bob, Cajun folklore painter Earl Hebert and mixed-media artist Epaul Julien, as well as African masks and a large totem.

There are also original stencil-style digital prints by Stoner. His subjects include authors Charles Bukowski and Hunter S. Thompson as well as musicians Aaron Neville, Dr. John and James Booker.

“As subject matter, I am inspired by substance-abusing authors and compelling musicians,” Stoner said.

Stoner acquired the prominent Sunufu bird overseeing the living room from a Moroccan art specialist who acquired tribal art from around the world for families such as the Rockefellers.

“The bird is slightly pigeon-toed,” Stoner said. “I am pigeon-toed, too. I developed a rapport with the bird. So, I traded some carpentry skills for him.”