



OFF THE WALL Clockwise from left: Art patrons peruse a recent show at Cherryhurst House; homeowner-visionary Dallas McNamara; a reading room outfitted from floor to ceiling in pale blue built-in bookshelves, offset with mod furnishings and flourishes of primary color.

A HOME FOR ART

A PRODIGAL DAUGHTER GETS A BRIGHT IDEA—A BREEZY, LIVE-IN ART GALLERY IN CHERRYHURST.

By Dan Oko | Photography by Julie Soefer

"I hope whoever shows their work here has great success, but this is not necessarily about selling the art," says Alice McNamara, whom everybody calls "Dallas," of her new project to create a sort of Parisian-style salon along the shaded streets of Montrose. To that end, McNamara has transformed a 1920s bungalow, one of the oldest homes in the neighborhood, into a private artist's retreat, event space and gallery. "The idea is that the artist-in-residence has their space, I have the casita out back as my private space, and we have the rest of the house, which is public space."

A long-limbed blond with a bright smile, the 40-something McNamara was raised in River Oaks, but after being sent away to boarding school on the East Coast in the eighth grade, she never really thought she'd live full time again in Houston. A documentary photographer, McNamara spent time in Cuba, New York City and New Orleans before the winds of Hurricane Katrina blew her back home.

Given her family's prominence—her father, Dan, founded the pediatric heart clinic at Texas Children's Hospital; her mother, Anne, a well-known philanthropist, married iconic architect Arthur E. Jones

"CHERRY" PICKED Above: For her Cherryhurst House, Dallas McNamara hired architect Carrie Glassman Shoemake to remodel a 1920s Montrose bungalow. Shoemake relocated interior walls to create a peekaboo effect that mixes public art-gallery rooms with private living spaces. Below: A lazy outdoor seating area speaks to the live-work space's honey feel.



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after divorcing Dan—it's not all that surprising that McNamara counts among her heroes the late Dominique de Menil. Along with her husband, John, de Menil founded the Menil Collection museum. "She did so much for this city," says McNamara. "I remember I had the chance to hang out with her in her kitchen one New Year's Eve. I loved that energy."

In turn, McNamara hopes the Cherryhurst House (cherryhursthouse.com), as her transformed homestead is now known, will function as both a nontraditional exhibition space and cultural hub for artists and tastemakers from across the globe. After purchasing the 2,650-square-foot property in 2009, she enlisted architect Carrie Glassman Shoemake to come up with a plan that involved shifting the entryway off the street and moving interior walls to create a peekaboo effect that mixes public rooms for viewing art with more private spaces for entertaining, studying and creative pursuits. Cherryhurst also boasts

native landscaping and a screen porch.

"Our intent, and one of the goals Dallas expressed for the project, is that the space should be *about* the art and about the people within," says Shoemake's assistant Kristin Schuster. "The simple, clean walls and the dark-stained floors further that goal."

So far, McNamara's vision of an alternative art space seems to be thriving. A recent visit to the house found the latest artists-in-residence, Barbara Levine and Paige Ramey, known collectively as Plan B, discussing their exhibit of found photographs. In the fall, Cherryhurst hosted an invitation-only mixology class with Alba Huerta of Julep bar. Other classes and exhibits are planned.

And when she needs a break, McNamara has her casita out back, a 770-square-foot second-story "treehouse," a structure separate from the main house nestled among the live oaks. "If I don't want to see anyone, I can just come here," she says. "But it feels good coming back to Houston. I really like what's going on with the art scene." ■

